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# The American RECORD GUIDE



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FEBRUARY, 1954

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VOLUME 20, No. 6

Edited by

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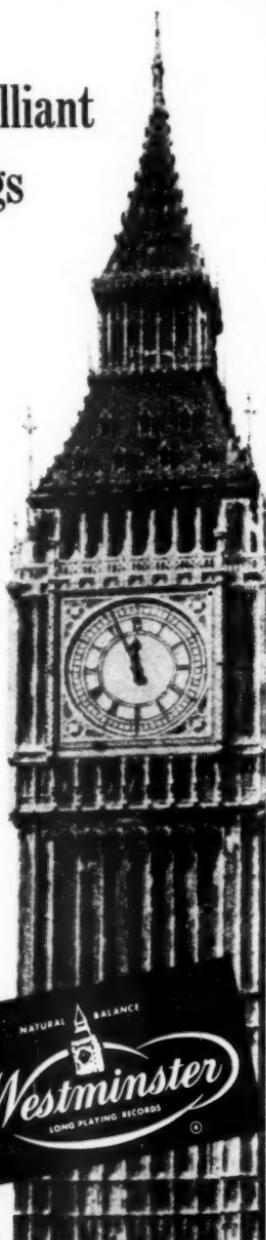
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London Symphony Orchestra  
Conducted by Hermann Scherchen

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Volume XX, No. 6

formerly **The American Music Lover**

## Westminster's Latest Hi-Fi Releases

**HOLST:** *The Planets*; The Philharmonic Promenade Orchestra, the London Philharmonic Choir, conducted by Sir Adrian Boult. Westminster LP WL-5235, \$5.95.

▲HOLST's astrological musical absorption with *The Planets* occurred in 1915, probably a reaction from the war, though the composer was somewhat of a mystic who turned to such subjects for some of his best music. There was a vogue for this type of music following World War I, for this was an extraordinarily experimental period in music. But Holst, while being in many ways an experimenter, was not a camouflaging worker even though he chose strange subjects and used large orchestrations as in the present work. As the annotator here so aptly says, Holst had his feet on the ground, even if his head were in the stars. *The Planets* is an uneven score but its best pages have a particular fascination with some fine tunes and atmospheric effects. The orchestral sounds are glowingly glorious as well as subtly ingenious.

There is no program to this work, but the composer gives us a clue in the titles to music's significance in the case of each of the seven planets: *Mars, The Bringer of War*; *Venus, The Bringer of Peace*; *Mercury, The Winged Messenger*; *Jupiter, the Bringer of Jollity*, etc. That this score is one of the most imaginative of its period cannot be denied; its final section *Uranis, The Mystic* remains a haunting thing of its kind.

When Sir Adrian Boult recorded this work in 1945, its reproductive realism prompted one English reviewer to exclaim "it is more actual than anything we have had before and should almost cause heart failure from excitement, even in the hardened gramophone." HMV's transfer of this earlier recording in 1952 failed to sustain the "heart failure," but the present recording restores it, if one admits that its type of audio excitement creates such a state—I'd say today such high-fidelity reproduction might well prove instead a heart stimulus. In more academic words, this is sensational in the best manner that Westminster's fine engineering has always been sensational. Boult, who conducted the first performance of this suite back in 1918, brings an authority and expressive puissance to the performance. —P.H.R.

**WALTON:** *Belshazzar's Feast*; London Philharmonic Choir, Dennis Noble (baritone), Philharmonic Promenade Orchestra conducted by Sir Adrian Boult. Westminster LP WL-5248, \$5.95.

▲THIS powerful and intensely dramatic score has always been highly effective in the concert hall. For all its demands on the chorus, it is really a virtuosic *tour de force* for a conductor, which Walton affirmed in 1932. Like his earlier *Facade*, this music resulted from his close association with the Sitwells. This narrative poem was adapted from the Old Testament

by Osbert Sitwell, beginning with Isaiah's violent prophecy: "Thy sons thou shalt beget. They shall be taken away... Howl ye, howl ye, therefore: For the day of the Lord is at hand." Walton has devised a score of brusque rhythms and brutal harmonies to heighten the drama. It is powerfully stirring work, which has led one English writer to claim that "it is one of the most vivid and powerful of all choral works, at any rate modern ones."

*Belshazzar's Feast* was recorded in 1944 (Victor set 944) with the composer conducting and the same soloist as here. While that recording was a marvel of its time (its close microphone technique made of it a popular demonstration record set), the present o.e., with its spacious sound, its superb balance and higher-fidelity is a far greater engineering achievement. It is amazing to hear the clarity of the diction of the chorus and the soloist in this performance; one hardly expects in an intricate choral work of this kind to get the words so easily. Boult gives a wonderfully dramatic rendition of the music without over-emphasis on its violence or brutality. —P.H.R.

## A Lieder Recital

**SCHUBERT:** *An die Musik; Im Frühling; Wehmuth; Das Lied im Grünen; Ganymed; Gretchen am Spinnrade; Nähe des Geliebten; Die junge Nonne; An Sylvia; Auf dem Wasser zu singen; Nachtriolen; Der Musensohn; Elisabeth Schwarzkopf (soprano) and Edwin Fischer (piano).* Angel LP 35022, \$5.95.

▲ **MISS SCHWARZKOPF** has chosen a varied program, mostly, it seems, unfami-

liar to many concert goers. It is odd that such a song as *Ganymed*, so long unrecorded, should now make its fourth appearance on LP—the third within a matter of months. *Nachtriolen*, a charming though virtually unknown piece, follows the recent posthumous release of Elisabeth Schumann's fine version (on a 78 rpm HMV disc). Inevitably Miss Schwarzkopf sings with charm, best in the lighter songs though the characteristic color of her tone is rather dark. She is an artist with imagination, sometimes going too far, perhaps, in the underlining of words and the careful turning of musical phrases. One feels occasionally that the long line of the whole composition has been lost in detail.

*An die Musik* is conceived on a rather small scale, intimately rather than nobly. I feel some lack of continuity in *Im Frühling*, a general fussiness; one remembers the superb movement of Gerhardt's old recording. *Wehmuth* is dark and sombre; *Das Lied im Grünen* is light but not as infectious as Schumann's, nor is *Nähe des Geliebten* held together with the wizardry of that lamented artist. *Die junge Nonne* is of the passionate school.

The fact that Edwin Fischer assists at the piano holds out great promise, but this is only partially realized. Presumably he believes an accompanist should provide only a modest background for the singer and in this he is abetted by rather weak and not too clear reording. In *Gretchen am Spinnrade* the pianist does not make much of the spinning-wheel figure, but rather follows along with the singer. The piano reproduction is somewhat better on the second side than the first. The voice is always well reproduced. —P.L.M.

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By George F. Varkonyi:<sup>\*</sup>

## Modern High-Fidelity Test Records

EVERY user of high quality equipment at one time or another has asked himself: "How good is my sound system?" Until the recent advent of modern test records for the home-user, this question posed a definite problem.

Before this, several difficult alternatives were possible. If the owner had an abundance of money in the bank, he could send his equipment to a qualified laboratory for analysis. This would entail dismantling and transporting of amplifier, speaker, cabinet and accessories to a place usually inaccessible. If concrete results could be obtained in this way, perhaps it would have been justified. But to the layman, the ambiguous graph, charts and specifications, sent to him by the laboratory, could be misleading and meaningless. Of course, the equipment could be returned to the manufacturer with similar inconveniences. Since manufacturers check their equipment against their own standards, this would not necessarily determine how effectively the equipment functions in the owner's home, for if it met with the manufacturer's original specifications, the latter would be unconcerned further.

The most important shortcomings of tests like the above are not their inconvenience, cost or difficulty of interpretation, for no matter what the results might be they do not determine how well one's equipment performs in one's home. It is obvious that only an overall test which takes in all the components of the sound system, including the acoustic properties of the room in which it is used (definitely a part of the whole chain), can give a

comprehensive reply to "How good is my sound system?" The recently issued test records, however, when properly used, can give a conclusive answer.

Dealers in audio equipment have long realized the need to "show off their wares" by specifically selected recordings which were referred to as "engineers' test records." Obviously, a dealer is concerned with exploiting his equipment to its best advantage. Hence, such recordings were chosen. They were all brilliant in tonal quality. Most employed the close microphone technique, giving a false illusion of presence. They usually featured a good deal of solo work—relatively easy to reproduce. Even mediocre equipment seemed to take on a new tonal luster when playing such test recordings. All this, however, is in direct opposition to the true purpose of the "test" record, which must be designed to show off whatever faults the system may have rather than to disguise them. Quite a number of such test records have been recently released for the benefit of audio enthusiasts.

These records may be divided into three classifications: 1. Those for the music listener with no technical interest other than good sound for the reproduction of music. 2. Those for the audio hobbyist with limited technical knowledge. 3. Those for the engineer. The last-named require special equipment for proper evaluation. They are specifically designed for the professional audio engineer and experimenter.

The above listing is flexible; it does not imply that engineers would be interested only in the third category. To the contrary, some of the discs from each category will be essential to an audio technician. It should be noted, never-

<sup>\*</sup>Hudson View Gardens, 183rd St. and Pinehurst Ave., New York 33, N.Y.

theless, that certain test records—unless used in conjunction with expensive equipment—can produce false results when interpreted by ear. It is difficult to determine frequency distortion by listening to steady-tone test discs. Therefore, these particular records are recommended only for the technician.

The determination of quality by listening to selected musical excerpts, on the other hand, is both practical and desirable. Whereas the untrained ear cannot determine the distortion of a single tone, in complex music it is quite sensitive to all forms of distortion provided it is not played at too loud or too low a level. Normal room level should be used during all tests. The following forms of distortion are prevalent in recordings.

#### **Frequency Distortion and Imbalance**

These two forms of distortion are related, but the terms are interchangeable. There is frequency distortion when the overall system does not respond equally to tones of all frequencies. This is evidenced by the over-emphasis or deficiency of bass and/or treble. This may be due to poor response of the amplifier, cartridge, or speaker. Or, it may be due to incorrect or inadequate record compensation, resulting in a form of imbalance. However, a system which is flat in response and properly compensated is not necessarily aurally balanced. Balance is the function of the additional factors of room, acoustics, speaker response (including cabinet), speaker placement, microphone placement used in the recordings, seating and size of orchestra, the conductor's capricious ideas about balance, the acoustics of the recording studio, and finally the level of loudness at which your equipment is played. Exact frequency response can and should be determined by laboratory instruments. Balance can only be determined by ear, and even this is arbitrary.

#### **Harmonic and Intermodulation Distortion**

These are two distinct types of distortion. However, engineers are be-

ginning to accept intermodulation distortion ratings as the criterion of equipment performance. Although there is no fixed relationship between harmonic and intermodulation distortion, contrary to some literature on the subject, harmonic distortion is prerequisite for the generation of intermodulation products. Intermodulation can be detected by shrill rasping highs and/or muddy bass. It can also be quantitatively analyzed by the proper instruments.

#### **Transient Distortion**

This type of distortion is the inability of the equipment to reproduce clearly sudden bursts of sound—such as drums in the bass register, and triangles, bells and jangling of keys and so forth in the treble. The piano is a good test for the overall transient response of all frequencies. If any of the sounds are slurred or muddy, it is an indication of transient distortion. Listed below are three groupings of high-fidelity test discs now available. They are classified to their practical use.

#### **Test Records—Group I**

These discs are for music listeners without technical experience or equipment. They are primarily intended for the aural determination of intermodulation, frequency and transient distortion. They are also invaluable for adjusting tonal balance both for novice and engineer.

*Capitol's A Study in High Fidelity* (SAL9020) features a comprehensive booklet with a detailed survey of high-fidelity problems and instructions for the use of the record. One side of the disc is devoted to selections of classical music, and the other side to selections of jazz. All are superbly recorded and chosen to test all facets of reproduction.

*Urania's High Fidelity Demonstration Record* (URLP 7084) is also a superbly recorded disc. The instructions are not as complete or as desirable for the novice. There is included a series of steady tones covering the audio spectrum, which is invaluable for determining turntable wow. The use of these steady tones is not recom-

mended for evaluating the frequency response of your equipment without a sensitive measuring device (i.e. vacuum tube voltmeter, decibel meter, oscilloscope). Aurally, there are too many factors involved including the unreliability of the human ear.

*Westminster's Hi-Fi Demonstration Record* (XTV 19129) contains selections from some of the finest recordings that this company has made. They have been chosen to show off all forms of record distortion. There is also included a stroboscope on the disc label to adjust turntable speed. For the amateur there is a lack of satisfying instructions. Steady tone test frequencies are also included and the same remarks apply here as to the *Urania* disc.

[Although the last two records have inadequate instruction, it is believed that with the help of this article that they can be used advantageously by an interested reader. —Editor]

## Test Records—Group II

These discs are for the non-professional audio enthusiast without elaborate test equipment.

*Cook Laboratories' Beam Test Record* (Series 50 "N-A") is a fine disc for accurately determining the intermodulation distortion of anyone's complete system. Two tones are recorded simultaneously, sweeping through the upper audio range—1,000 cycles apart. If a *dot-dash* is reproduced through your loud speaker, the intermodulation of the entire system is less than 2%. If a *dash-dot* is heard distortion exceeds 2%. Side 2 of this disc is for testing binaural equipment in the same manner. This record should be included in groups I and III, as listeners as well as engineers can profit from its usage.

*Dubbings' The Measure of your Phonograph's Equalization* (D101-LP) is primarily for what its title conveys—checking and adjusting the equalization of your equipment, which is accomplished by means of an ingenious and inexpensive measuring device consisting of three bulbs (which comes with the record). It

is connected across the speaker terminals of your equipment. The level of reproduction is adjusted so that the middle bulb lights. On the disc, there are four bands of signal runs, ranging from 30 to 12,000 cycles. Each recorded band corresponds to one of the major LP characteristic curves—i.e. Columbia LP, Orthophonic, NARTB, and AES. If your compensator is set to one of these positions and the proper band is played on the record, only the center bulb should light as the frequencies change from 30 to 12,000. If either of the other bulbs light a frequency response deviation exceeding plus or minus 3 db is indicated. One bulb indicates the plus deviation, the other the minus. The instructions are clear and concise. A word of caution, however: if the level is set too high the bulbs may burn out if your equipment is provided with a control (on some pre-amps). This should be switched out, if possible, as it will give a false reading. (This is not mentioned in the instructions accompanying the record.) If this is not possible, turn loudness control on full and set volume by auxiliary control, provided on most equipment. If neither expedient is possible and technical assistance is unavailable, do not attempt to use the record or its measuring device. When used with more accurate test equipment, this disc can be an asset to any audio technician because of its inclusion of the four major LP curves.

*Dubbings' The Measuring of your Phonograph's Performance* (D100-LP) gives in its first 13 bands frequency test tones, ranging from 30 to 12,000 cycles, using a 500 cps bass turnover and flat treble characteristics. It cannot be reproduced on any LP curve and is therefore not recommended for the non-technician. The 45-second unmodulated groove is valuable for determining motor rumble and hum. Next there is a 45-second 3,000 cycle steady tone for determining wow or flutter of turntable. The final five bands are 400 cycle tones, recorded at different levels for determining stylus wear and tracking. Instructions are adequate.

### Test Records—Group III

As these records are of prime interest to the professional or dyed-in-the-wool audio hobbyist, explanations are deemed unnecessary.

**London's Microgroove Frequency Test Record** (LL-738) is a worthy successor to the fine set of 78-rpm test discs, issued by London some years ago (LA-32, three records—still in use by many technicians). This LP is a frequency test disc with the special London LP characteristic—450 bass turnover and 3,000 cps treble turnover. Both slopes are 6 db per octave.

**Cook Laboratories' Frequency and Intermodulation Test Record** (Series 10) offers on side A a frequency test with 1 db tolerance to 12 kc—3 db to 12 kc. Side B, band 1, is a spot check frequency for Columbia LP characteristics. Bands 2 and 3 are for intermodulation testing, using 100 and 7,000 cps. Amplitude on band 2 is .0045, peak to peak. Band 3 is .0028, peak to peak. The remainder of the disc is devoted to a sweep band for determining tone arm resonance.

All of the above records, when properly used, will provide information regarding the characteristics and the quality of your sound system. The layman is warned, however, against arriving at specific conclusions without adequate listening experience. It is well to remember the old adage: "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread."

## OPERA SPOTLIGHT

**DONZETTI:** *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Opera in 3 Acts); Maria Meneghini Callas (Lucia), Giuseppe Di Stefano (Edgardo), Tito Gobbi (Lord Ashton), Raffaele Arie (Raimondo), Valiano Natali (Lord Bucklaw), Anna Maria Canali (Alisa), Gino Sarri (Normano), Orchestra and Chorus of the Florence May Festival conducted by Tullio Serafin. Angel LP set 3503B, two discs, \$11.90.

▲THE OPERATIC WORLD has always loved their Lucias—most of them famous

ladies of the theatre who could provide a show of dazzling virtuosity calculated to bring the house down at the culmination of the "Mad Scene." Donizetti's Lucia dominates that scene with an éclat which Scott's heroine in the novel did not possess, even as Thomas' Ophelia thirty-three years later was to do in a like manner which Shakespeare's gentle maid did not. How much wiser Bellini was in his *I Puritani*—there is a sweet sadness in his gentler mad scene of Elvira—a finer musical setting.

This is the third complete *Lucia* on LP, introducing one of the greatest post-war artists who, in a relatively short time has become a reigning queen in the theatre. We have read a great deal about Mme. Callas' Lucia which she added to her repertoire after her phenomenal success as Elvira in *I Puritani*. She is one, of those true dramatic sopranos who can sing coloratura parts with equal success. Judging solely from her recordings, I would say that she is more successful in the latter parts; they seem to quicken her imagination and alert her musical intelligence more. As impressively as she sings *Tosca*, her *Elvira* and *Lucia* are more effective. I recall one writer, who had heard her in person many times, saying that in these roles she exhibited best her wonderfully expressive *legato*, which is true. In such roles, while demonstrating her amazing brilliance, she also proves herself capable of considerable vocal coloring and some beautiful *mezzo voce* singing.

For all the wonderful artistry of Callas' Lucia, however, it is difficult for me to forget the Lucia of Lina Pagliughi in the earlier Cetra set. There is a girlish charm and sweetness to Pagliughi's Lucia which Callas' lacks. I doubt that any other famous singer of this role ever brought the puissance and intensity to it that Callas does. Dolores Wilson, in the recent Urania set, for all her vocal freshness and brilliance does not give the life and substance to Lucia which Callas and Pagliughi do in their separate ways. Callas seems almost too mature for the role of this gentle maid, upon whom Donizetti bestowed a sophistication in

the final act not in keeping with the character. For all her nuanced artistry, I would say it is not in Callas' makeup to affirm the frailty of Lucia. As a singing show, however, hers is the most thrilling, which in itself is a considerable accomplishment. But if others, like myself, feel impelled to return to Pagliughi's gentler Lucia, it is not alone her sensitive artistry which attracts but also the finer singing by her associate, Giovanni Malipiero, as Edgardo. While Di Stefano has a naturally beautiful voice and sings his part with earnest conviction, there is little true expressive feeling in his performance. In the music of the final scene, the best in the opera, he works too hard for the best results. Malipiero is the more sensitive artist here.

Tito Gobbi, as Enrico, seems miscast for all his musical intelligence. Donizetti's lyrical music finds him often ill at ease and he seems unwilling to suppress his large voice. Arie's Raimondo is well sung and the balance of the cast are competent. Tullio Serafin is a true master of the orchestral forces. It is of interest to know that he has worked with Mme. Callas' since her assumption of the role of Elvira in 1949 and has coached her in this and many other operas.

The recording is excellent in realism and balance, though not as sensational as that of *I Puritani*. —P.H.R.

**LEHAR:** *The Merry Widow* (Operetta in 3 Acts); Elisabeth Schwarzkopf (Hanna Glawari), Erich Kunz (Count Danilo), Nicolai Gedda (Camille Rosillon), Emmy Loose (Valencienne), Otakar Kraus (Cascada), Anton Niessner (Baron Zeta), the Philharmonia Orchestra and Chorus under the direction of Otto Ackerman. Angel 3501-B, 2 discs \$11.90.

▲FRANZ LEHAR'S *The Merry Widow* (*Die lustige Witwe*) is the most alluring symbol of a particular era's "champagne moments," just as, 30 years previously, Johann Strauss Jr.'s *Fledermaus* had similarly expressed the exuberance of 19th-century *mittel Europa* gaiety. This operetta is the perfect expression of European worldliness in 1905, and this charming Angel recording is perhaps the perfect

February, 1954

transference of such a spirit to disc surfaces.

Angel has assembled a cast of singers, under the knowing direction of Otto Ackerman, who, apparently oblivious of the jitterbug assaults of our day, give the impression of understanding and assimilating the arts of coquetry, flirtation, and innuendo, as they were practiced 50 years ago in a world far less weary than it is to-day.

From the opening bars of the lengthened 1940 version of the overture (which could have been omitted to save the excisions in the third act) champagne corks begin popping. As soon as the singers appear on the scene, you will find yourself dizzy with the heady bubbles, as you swirl among potted palms and globes of light. Not only does Elisabeth Schwarzkopf use her beautifully trained voice for your delight in the *Vilja* and other songs, but she manages her spoken lines with the acme of badinage and chic. Miss Schwarzkopf is an irresistible Hanna.

Erich Kunz is a virtuoso Danilo, completely uninhibited in getting the reckless gaiety of the character across, and Nicolai Gedda, excepting a few throaty high notes, sings with much sentiment, particularly in *Sieh dort den kleinen Pavillon*. Emmy Loose is an attractive Valencienne.

If this is an example of the high-jinks of 1905, be it said that people worked far less studioously, efficiently, and self-consciously at being gay and happy than they do to-day.

The sounds that come from these discs are startlingly clear; they seem to promote, through some strange alchemy, a mood of intimate charm. An excellent libretto goes with the de-luxe set, accompanied by the provocative notes, penned with obvious affection for a bygone age, by the distinguished Ernest Newman.

—M. de S.

**WAGNER:** *Lohengrin*; Otto von Rohr (King Henry), Lorenz Fehrenberger (Lohengrin), Annelies Kupper (Elsa), Ferdinand Franz (Frederick), Helena Braun (Ortrud), Hans Braun (Herald), the Bavarian Radio Orchestra and

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Chorus conducted by Eugen Jochum. Decca LP set DX-131, 4 discs, \$23.60.

▲IT IS a long time since I have heard in the opera house an overall better cast performance of *Lohengrin* than this recorded version offers; everyone here is a first-rate singer and histrionically praiseworthy. Not since Melchior in his early days have I heard a more ingratiatingly sung *Lohengrin*. Herr Fehlenberger is an exceptionally accomplished German vocalist with a beautiful lyric tenor voice that recalls Tauber in his heyday. No German tenor since Tauber has been able to sing such exquisite *pianissimi* as Fehlenberger. As one friend of mine said, who heard the performance at my home, "he makes me like *Lohengrin* all over again." Annelies Kupper, who sang Senta in Decca's recent issue of *The Flying Dutchman*, is a lovely Elsa, both vocally and stylistically. Ferdinand Franz's magnificent baritone gives distinction to the villain Telramund and makes one feel sympathetic to this character, who is dominated by his corrupt wife. Helena Braun's voice is on the light side for Ortrud, but she is an intelligent artist who manages to get across the baleful qualities of the character. Herr von Rohr is a sonorous King Henry and Hans Braun a good Herald. The smaller parts are capably handled and the chorus is well trained.

Eugen Jochum's orchestral direction is distinguished for its tonal suavity and poise. His ability to shape a phrase and point up detail without disrupting the flow makes him a remembered protagonist as indeed he should be. Only the tenor has a similar ability in phrasing, in achieving and supporting a lovely tone and giving expressive feeling to detail. Herr Fehlenberger's singing of the Narrative in the last act is an artistic achievement all too seldom encountered in the opera house and on records.

Reproductively, this performance is a fine example of Deutsche Grammophon engineering. It is realistic and rich in tonal sound, and with correct offstage effects like the placement of *Lohengrin* down stage in his opening air to the Swan.

Except for a small cut in the last act, the music is complete. The previously issued *Urania Lohengrin* does not compete with this set in any way.

—P.H.R.

**WEBER:** *Oberon* (Opera in 3 Acts); Paula Bader (Rezia), Karl Liebl (Huon of Bordeaux), Hanne Muench (Fatima), Franz Fehringen (Oberon), Paula Bauer (Puck), Robert Titze (Sherasmin), Friederike Sailer (Mermaid), the Symphony Orchestra and Chorus of Suddeutscher Rundfunk, under the direction of Hans Mueller-Kray. Period SPL 575, 2 discs \$11.90.

▲WEBER'S *Oberon*, aside from its famous overture and its great soprano aria, has remained a virtual mystery throughout most of its 128 years of existence. Here, on four smooth and well-recorded Period surfaces lies this unknown territory, ready for your exploration. The preposterous and involved story with an added confusion of six speaking-roles, which take up much time, probably account for the lack of success achieved by Weber's opera—in reality his swan song.

Examining these discs, you will come across much beautiful and picturesque music, that prompted the celebrated critic, James Gibbons Huneker, to write in the *New York Times*, on the occasion of the opera's Metropolitan premiere, December 28, 1918, "But we may say without peradventure of doubt that there is more music in *Oberon* than an entire fleet of modern operas. Weber was a composer and a dramatist." This Metropolitan premiere, which enlisted Rosa Ponselle, Martinelli, Althouse, Alice Gentle, and Marie Sundelius, was unable to save *Oberon* from returning to the shadows of oblivion. The spoken recitatives, set to thematic music by Arthur Bodanzky, and the vogue and *éclat* of Rosa Ponselle in her first seasons of grand opera, were not enough to bring *Oberon* more than the 13 performances in three seasons. It was last given on January 6, 1921, and has not been heard since.

The present recording is musically complete, with all the spoken recitatives eschewed. The ebullient *Overture* is

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played with much spirit, and the orchestra and chorus of the Suddeutscher Rundfunk perform with precision under the meticulous beat of Hans Mueller-Kray.

Obviously, *Oberon* calls for a cast of great vocalists, and this, unfortunately, we do not have here. The best of the singers are Karl Liebl in the difficult music of Houn, with its arpeggios up to high C, and Hanne Muench, who sings the music of Fatima smoothly. Rezia and her great scena, *Ozean! Du Ungeheuer!*, needs the grandiose voice and style of a Flagstad, a Ponselle, or a Florence Austral. It must be reported that Helen Bader does not approach these clarion-voiced ladies. Her big aria is carefully but stridently sung, the high notes seeming to fight themselves. Like such singers as Bauemer and Ursuleac, Frau Bader's voice is afflicted by a wobble, this is unfortunate.

However, shortcomings notwithstanding, this is an interesting release, and the surfaces and reproduction are up to the fine recording sound of our day. —M. de S.

## Schoenberg's "Gurre-Lieder"

**SCHOENBERG:** *Gurre-Lieder* (complete); Richard Lewis and Ferry Gruber, (tenors), John Riley (bass), Ethel Semser (soprano), Nell Tangeman (mezzo), Morris Gesell (speaker), with the chorus and orchestra of The New Symphony Society of Paris conducted by René Leibowitz. Haydn Society HSL-100, \$18.50.

▲NO doubt apprised that this performance was in the works, RCA Victor hastened to re-issue its famous old Stokowski one on not three but two microgroove discs (LCT-6012, \$11.44). Presumably there were sizable cuts in that version; I haven't heard it through since I parted with my shellacs five years ago and memory does not serve as it should. But I did get hold of the re-issue long enough to confirm one suspicion and to ascertain one fact: to wit, that Rose Bampton's voice, before it changed from contralto, was one of the grandest treasures the vocal

art ever knew, and furthermore that it simply does not tip the scales sufficiently if you can't hear the orchestra, which you can't on the Victor microgroove discs. So saying, I must immediately add that the finest single aspect of the Haydn Society recording is that it *does*, but crystal clear, let you hear everything, or at least almost everything, that happens in the orchestra. And the orchestra *is* the center of gravity in this unwieldy masterpiece. Space does not permit an extensive review, nor would it be justified on the grounds of reader interest because only a minority would be really interested. In lieu of more detailed coverage, and more pertinently in lieu of a perfect recorded performance, this group is warmly commended to the new version because we should be grateful for having it at all. Nell Tangeman is in exceptionally good voice as Waldtaube and Richard Lewis is outstanding as Waldemar; Ethel Semser is regrettably out of her depth as Tove but not so obtrusively as to blight the whole; the lesser soloists are satisfactory; the choristers sing with unfaltering skill. Leibowitz elicits generally first rate collaboration from his mammoth orchestra, but the equivalent of two standardized symphonic ensembles is much more difficult to keep in hand than one would be and things occasionally get out of hand. Leibowitz is more efficient than inspired for all of that, his sympathy for the work notwithstanding. For those who do not know the score at all, it may be summed up as a post-Wagnerian, pre-tonal "drama-symphony" in three sections based on (and being a setting of) a symbol-laden saga by Jens Jacobsen that told of Waldemar I, the ill-fated 12th century ruler of Denmark. A 38-page explanatory booklet is included in the Haydn Society album; it contains a penetrating discussion of the music by Leibowitz, an exhaustive consideration of the text by Allen D. Sapp, and the text itself in German and English. Altogether a most enterprising endeavor, for which the sponsors are due no small thanks. The engineering, it should be mentioned, tends to favor the highs and lows at some small loss to the mass of middle tone, so

that the sound is occasionally amorphous just when the most interesting things are going on. But this is a small enough defection and may be forgiven in the light of the overall excellences. —J.L.

## The Beethoven Concerti by Wilhelm Kempff

**BEETHOVEN:** *Five Piano Concertos*; Wilhelm Kempff with Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Paul Van Kempen. Decca set DX-125, 3 discs, \$17.85.

▲THOSE who know and admire Kempff's performances of Beethoven's piano sonatas will welcome this set of the five piano concertos. The pianist, rightly regarded in Europe as one of the authoritative Beethoven performers, is a sensitive and poetic artist with a facile technique—his florid passages in these works are smoothly articulated and completely free. Kempff is neither pedantic nor eccentric in his interpretations, rather he is a performer who aims to let the composer speak for himself. There are other great pianists—Schnabel, for example—whose phrasing is often more subtly tensed and whose feeling is more deeply probing, but one does not necessarily recall Schnabel or any other worthy competitor while listening to Kempff. For the latter's musical absorption is so complete, so mature in conception and so sensitive in execution that this listener is inclined to accept him on his own stylistic terms. If, in retrospect, a listener recalls the work of others, then he must make his own decisions on which player satisfies him. If Kempff had the field to himself, there would be few who could not live contently with his stylistic artistry. What I like about these performances is the rapport between pianist and conductor and their rhythmic fluency and life.

The recording, contrary to the opinion of one leading newspaper reviewer, is lifelike and tonally brilliant. The piano is somewhat thin in sound on the higher end, but its tonal brightness is effective in the more brilliant sections of the music. I

would have like more clarity in the orchestra but the overall sound is not lacking in realism. Of course, with five works like these run sequentially on three discs, employing 340 lines to the inch, some quality is apt to be lost. The records which I received were smooth and without audible blemish. Undoubtedly, Decca will issue these recordings individually, which should make for better reproduction since wider groove spacing will be allowed. I can see no reason for having all five together, as few would wish to play them in succession. The notes with the set, written by the pianist, are exceptionally fine.

—P.H.R.

## A Monteverdi Mass

**MONTEVERDI:** *Messa a quattro voci da cappella*; **LASSO:** *Psaumes de la penitence a cinq voix*; Amsterdam Motet Choir conducted by Felix de Nobel; Albert de Klerk (organ). Concert Hall LP CHS 1196, \$5.95.

▲THE LABELING here is a little confusing, though perhaps it should be noted that "da cappella" is correct enough, not a misprint for "a cappella." Of the Lasso opus, however, we have not seven penitential psalms, but only the first of them. Presumably the others are to follow. The organ is used to accompany the Monteverdi, which score has a continuo part, but not the Lasso. There is a good deal of church atmosphere in the recording, particularly when the organ is playing. A slight echo is generally to the good, though it does sometimes obscure the singers' attack. The performances are of the healthy school, good, straight and full-blooded, with fine climaxes and no self-conscious polishing. The individual parts stand out clearly but in good balance.

The *Mass* is a short work setting the text sensitively yet never lingering over the words. I struck especially by the vitality and excitement that is in the *Sanctus*, a movement far removed from the other worldliness of Palestrina and his school. The Lasso is also great and sturdy music, well suited to the solid performance it gets here. —P.L.M.



## 45 rpm Internationals

▲ RECORD BUVERS in the old days who had adventuresome proclivities would seek out the International Catalogues of Victor and Columbia. Not a few celebrity recordings were in these lists, but it wasn't celebrity discs which alone motivated the interest in the International lists. Lots of folks like to hunt out the everyday type of music of other countries, the sort of music which has kept the turntables spinning 'round the globe. Some folks went in for folk music—the authentic kind, not the back-woods, hill-billy stuff that passes for folk music today. Buried in Columbia old International lists were authentic folk material like the now famous Spanish folk songs, sung by the incomparable Nina de los Peines (now fortunately transferred to LP—Columbia FJ-9536). There were others, deserving of similar revival, but today the International lists are mainly focused on popular music of the represented countries.

Recently, we acquired a group of 45-rpm International catalogues put out by RCA Victor and discovered a lot of new adventures in everyday music. Being operatically minded, we could not avoid combing the Italian list to discover whether some Red Seal celebrities were represented—just as in the old days. They were. Names like Tagliavini, Tito Gobbi, Tita Schipa and Gino Bechi loomed from the printed pages. Catalogues don't tell you the origin of the songs that these artists chose to sing but the record labels do. Sometimes, we discovered the songs were from films in which the singers appeared. Of more interest (we found out the hard way—by acquiring a bunch of records) were some of the popular songs. For example four that Tagliavini sings *con amore*, which made one wish that there was source material from which to get the words of songs in foreign tongues. Dialect can be *molto difficile* to anyone, even if that person knows a smattering of real Italian. With a typical Neapolitan orchestra, mandolins and all, Tagliavini sings *Scalinatella* (*The Little Stairway*) and *'O Paese d' o Sole* (*The Land of the Sun*) on disc 53-4023, and *El Guitarrico* (*The Minstrels*) and that old favorite of Caruso and countless other Italian singers of years back, *Musica Proibita* (*Forbidden Music*) (disc 53-7185). You'll find other Tagliavini listed if you're interested.

Tito Gobbi, whose superb singing as Tonio in the Italian film version of *Pagliacci*, and as Scarpia in the new Angel set of *Tosca*, stamps him as one of the foremost baritones of our time, is well represented. Especially appealing is his singing of Tosti's 'A *Vuchella* and that caressing, Italian popular favorite *Occhi di Fata* on disc 53-4014.

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He also sings *Musica Proibita*, which was featured in a movie of the same title, with a Neapolitan song from the same picture called *Famme Sunna Cu'tte* on disc 53-4017. Other popular Italian favorites by the baritone, are Fisco's *Dicitencello riae* and Valente's *Torna* on disc 53-4006, and *Take the Sun* and *La Montanara* from the film. *The Glass Mountain*, on disc 53-4007. In the first of the latter songs, the baritone, singing in English, recalls the late Giuseppe De Luca. *La Montanara*, with its accordion and guitar accompaniment, has the character of a folk song. It is sung with considerable feeling by Gobbi. All of these songs are also available on LPM-3090 (*Around the World in Music—Italy*, Vol. I, previously reviewed in this magazine), but the better quality of the recording in the 45 rpm discs is preferred by us.

Speaking of the LP discs, *Around the World in Music* (which are also available in 45-rpm albums at a more reasonable price), RCA Victor should continue this series. While it stands to reason that some may not want all the selections on the LPs, it is good to know that most can be acquired separately on 45 discs. Two Tito Schipa discs, which are not contained in his *Around the World in Music* LP discs, offer the noted tenor's singing of *Torna a Surriento* with *O Marennello* (*The Little Sailor*) (53-7240) and Bixio's *Torna, Piccinia* and *Vivere* from the film *Vivere*, in which Schipa was featured (53-7249).

Gino Bechi, who recalls the late Titta Tuffo, is heard in Tosti's *L'Ultima Canzone* and Buzzi-Pecchia's *Lolita* on disc 53-7247. These songs were not included in the Bechi LP (LPT-3011) in the *Around the World* Series. The other eight selections on that LP disc are all available on single 45s—they include such old favorites as Tosti's *Marchiare*, DiCapua's *Maria, Mari*, which Bechi makes the most of, and *Torna a Surriento*. There's a disc of that latter song by Comm. Giuseppe Godone, a tenor with a pleasing voice, which includes one of our favorite Neapolitan songs, *Santa Lucia luntana* (25-0732—78 rpm).

The International series represent many countries—with the longest list for Latin America. A favorite singer of Latin America is Maria Victoria, who has a husky, sultry style. She can put over a song in quite an imitable way. Still included in the Latin American lists are recordings by the late Carlos Gardel, whom some people called the South American Maurice Chevalier. The 45-rpm lists are liberally sprinkled with Senorina Victoria and Senor Gardel. Among other nationalities are the French-Canadians, the Scotch, the Irish, the Germans, the Poles, the Czechs, the Greeks, and the Scandinavians. There is also a list of Hebrew recordings, including some by famous Cantors. Among the relatively few Swedish discs is a record (43-1105) of two National favorites—*Sverige* and *Ack Varmeland, du Skona*—sung by Jussi Björling.

Having a fondness for the songs of Scotland, and being an admirer of the late Harry Lauder, we have watched the growing list of recordings

by Robert Wilson, a young tenor who is as adept with the Scottish brogue as Lauder was. Mr. Wilson has made quite a variety of Scottish popular songs, most of which are effective in their particularly "clannish" way. Of those we've heard, we can recommend the traditional *The Day We Went to Rothesay O'* coupled with the humorous *The Highlandman's Umbrella* (43-9517); the tuneful *Where Falls the Dew on the Heather*, a wee bit of sentiment, and the folksy *Heather Belle* (43-9514); the typical *Gathering of the Clans* and *The Gay Gordons* (43-9524); and *Tillietudlem Castle*, with its catchy tune, and *Bonnie Lassie from Bonnie Doon* in which the tenor is aided by a vocal group (43-9518). A personable young baritone with fine diction by the name of Nicky Kidd sings *Skye Boat Song* with bird and wind sound-effects (the former sounding like authentic sea-gulls is evidently dubbed in from another recording) and an amusing number called *The Wedding of Highland Laddie* (43-9515); also *The Bay from Balmoral (And the Girl from Galway Bay)*, a blend of Scotch and Irish, coupled with a song on an old theme, *I Can't Help It (If I'm Still in Love with You)* (43-9527). As a sampler of Scottish bag pipes, there's a disc by the pipers of the 2nd Battalion Gordon Highlanders with eight short pieces—Marches, Strathspeys, Reels and Quick-Steps (43-9523).

As a sampling of the Irish popular songs of the day (Ireland is not too well represented) try the recordings by Terry (no other name), who has a pleasing voice: *There's a Little Bit of Irish (In Everybody's Heart)* coupled with *Isle of Innesfree* (43-7520), and *Christmas in Killarney* coupled with *The Wild Colonial Boy* (43-7521). If you like Irish Reels, you'll want a disc by the Kinvara Céilidh Band (43-7519); it's got a lilt which affects the feet.

Ask your dealer to get you the RCA Victor International lists. If you *Sprechen sie Deutsch*, you'll find a goodly list of German popular songs and instrumental pieces. There's also a couple of records by the *Chor und Knabenchor der St. Hedwigs Kathedrale* of religious and folk song selections, well sung by a choir with a group of pleasing young sopranos—discs 53-4174 and 53-4175. Since Greek remains Greek to us, we can't recommend any Greek selections, though should there be any authentic folk pieces among them we'd like to know to pass the word along. In the old days, the International lists had a lot of authentic folk music which is sadly missing from today's lists. Something should be done about this. When it comes to Polish and Czech we're just as ignorant as the next fellow who hasn't been fortunate enough to visit such countries in days when visitors were welcome. Going through a bunch of foreign-language record lists requires a *Baedeker's Guide*, which just isn't available. Somebody should devise such a guide, giving information on titles and the gist of any song texts. Maybe, with such a guide, folks would find more interest in the everyday songs of other countries. Languages divide countries—not music.

—J.N.

## Introducing "Overtone"

**HYMNS OF PRAISE:** *Isle confessor* (Plainchant); *Now let every tongue adore Thee; Hosanna to the living Lord* (Bach); **SIXTEENTH CENTURY POLYPHONY:** *Call to remembrance* (Farrant); *Ave verum* (Josquin Des Pres); *Repleti sunt* (Handl Gallus); *Cantate Domino* (Hassler); **EARLY AMERICAN MUSIC:** *Wake every breath* (Billings); *O God, to rescue me* (Bay Psalm Book); *Glorious things* (Southern harmony); **RUSSIAN CHURCH MUSIC:** *Credo* (Grechaninov); *Salvation belongeth to our God* (Tschasnikov); *Glory be to God* (Rachmaninoff); *Nunc dimittis* (Grechaninov); **THREE PSALMS BY CONTEMPORARY AMERICANS:** *Psalm 123; Psalm 136* (Thomson); *Psalm 8* (Stark); Divinity School Choir, Yale University, conducted by James Borden. Overtone LP 2, \$5.95.

▲WE ARE told in the jacket notes that this is a strictly non-professional job, singing by a group of divinity students filled with zeal to better the common choral repertoire of our churches. The disc was first made as a souvenir for members and friends, but the demand has justified putting it on the regular market. The recording was done in Marquand Chapel in 1952.

It should be said at once that the work of the chorus is well above the usual in this kind of music, and it is encouraging to feel that these young men will have a hand in shaping the future course of church music in this country. They sing for the most part in good, easily understandable English, in a remarkably relaxed and straightforward style. They are at their best in such quietly sonorous pieces as the Ferrant and the Josquin, but hardly less impressive in the more stark and elemental early American numbers (these latter simply and effectively arranged by Luther Noss). The Handl piece is more taxing, not quite so satisfactorily balanced. The Russian offerings are effective in their way, though I was

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conscious in listening to the *Credo* that it is all too obviously translated music. The three American psalms make an interesting contrast: Virgil Thomson's sparse settings are not without relationship to the Billings. —P.L.M.

**SCHEIDT:** *Warum betreibst du dich, mein Herz; Da Jesus an dem Kreuze stand; Magnificat noni toni; Modus ludendi pleno organo pedaliter; Variations on "Est-ce Mars";* Luther Noss playing the Holtkamp organ of Battell Chapel, Yale University. Overtone LP 3, \$5.95.

▲SAMUEL SCHEIDT (1587-1654) was a pupil of Sweelinck who passed his life in comparative obscurity but left enough great music to insure his immortality. Listening to the two sets of chorale variations which fill the first side of this disc, and to the other pieces—all taken from his collection called *Tabulatura nova*—it is difficult to realize that this man lived a century before Bach.

The *Magnificat* is interesting as an example of the use of the organ in simplifying the choir: the lines of the canticle are chanted by the singers, then enlarged upon by the organ. For the most part the text could be fitted to this purely instrumental music, but instead it is left to the hearer's imagination. The variations on *Est-ce Mars?* were composed in conjunction with those of Scheidt's master, Sweelinck. They are written for manuals alone.

Mr. Noss plays this delectable program on an organ built in 1951 by Walter Holtkamp. It is an instrument of the Baroque type, with lovely tone qualities, especially in the flute stops. The playing is imaginative and warm, yet always well within the frame of the music and always rhythmically vital. The reproduction is excellent. —P.L.M.

## As In Bach's Time

**BACH:** *The Complete Works for Solo Violin*; Rolf Schroeder (violin). Columbia set SL-189, \$17.85.

▲THIS notice is belated because I simply had to live with these records a while lest

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I make an idiot of myself. Schroeder uses a curved bow throughout, which is what the experts have been prescribing from the beginning because Bach wrote with the curved bow in mind. To hear these performances so soon after those of Heifetz, however, was something of an esthetic trauma. They reminded me of nothing more lovely, at the outset, than the baying of a lovelorn alley cat. Of course I was struck by the fact that Bach's original chords came out as chords, as they should, and not as slick arpeggios, as they must on a modern instrument. But still I thought the sound rather ugly on the whole. Live and learn. After a month of repeating hearings I am convinced, along with Albert Schweitzer and other eminences, that this is the way the unaccompanied *Sonatas* and *Partitas* should go. My reaction to Schroeder's tone still holds; it is not pretty and that is that. But his executive abilities are really impressive, and one marvels anew at the polyphonic grandeur of the works themselves—here revealed for the first time in my experience. The dynamics are so much more logically expressed that the listener perforce gains a new insight into their *raison d'être* and suspects, indeed, that his understanding of their place in the total conception has been wrong all along. What a pity that an artist of sovereign attainments, say Heifetz himself, has not elected to heed the musicologists as Schroeder did! The reproductive range is ample and the surfaces clean.

—J.L.

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**BACH:** *Orgelbuechlein (Little Organ Book)*; Finn Videro, playing on the organ at Soro, Denmark. Haydn Society LP discs 83 (*Chorale Preludes 1-22*) and 84 (*Chorale Preludes 23-45*). \$5.95 each.

▲SCHWEITZER, surely the foremost living Bach authority, says that the *Orgelbuechlein* is "the lexicon of Bach's speech. This must be the starting-point if we would understand what he is striving to express in the themes of the Cantatas and Passions. Until the significance of

(Continued on page 208)

# Record Notes and Reviews



**T**HERE IS IN SOULS a sympathy with sounds, and as the mind is pitched the tear is pleased with melting airs or martial, brisk or grave; some chord in unison with what we hear is touched within us, and the heart replies.

—William Cooper

## Orchestra

**BACH:** *Passacaglia in G Minor; Toccata and Fugue in D Minor; Komm, suesser Tod;* Leopold Stokowski and his Symphony Orchestra. RCA Victor LRM-7033, \$2.99.

▲THERE is no impartiality, and has not been from the first, on the subject of Stokowski's hyphenated Bach. At this late date, one supposes, every listener has decided that he likes these transcriptions or hates the *idea* of them—for there is no scorning them on their own merits as dissociated from their context. Whether or not they are proper projections of the Bachian spirit is moot and will ever be, because all the torrents of purist abuse have left them unscathed in public affections. The performances herewith are every bit as glowing as those of old, except that the most advanced recording techniques lend even more luxuriance to the glowing colors that Stokowski deploys so freely.

—J.L.

**BARTOK:** *Concerto for Orchestra;* Herbert von Karajan conducting the Philharmonia Orchestra. Angel LP 35003, \$5.95.

▲HERE is a magnificent recording; in balance and fidelity far ahead of the other

two LP issues, both of which derived from 78 rpm. This work remains one of the most brilliant and satisfying orchestral scores that Bartok left us. He wrote it under the auspices of the Koussevitzky Foundation and dedicated the score to Koussevitzky's (then) wife, Natalie. The death song of the slow movement gives his feelings on the departure of one whom he must have admired. The gamut of emotions encompassed in this work is considerable. Bartok always was a realist and in this score he looks at life without flinching from its chaotic upheavals and heart-breaks. Like Beethoven before him, he has his assuaging moments that attain poignant beauty in the *Elegy* and compassion in the *Intermezzo*. The score abounds in virtuosic effects and its dramatic moments are powerfully felt and conveyed. It is in these sections of the score that von Karajan supercedes his predecessors, rising to interpretative heights that grip the imagination and emotions of the listener. In the more lyrical sections, notably in the jesting second movement (whose curious character was never explained by the composer), von Karajan misses the humor. Van Beinum was especially effective in the second movement, and in the *Elegy*, more elegant and sensitive. In the dramatic sections, he was always majestic but without affirmation of the barbaric qualities inherent in the dramatic music. To achieve a

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realistic recording of a work like this is an engineering feat which Angel, alone to date, has realized. And, it is that wonderful realism in sound which gives this disc precedence. No one who likes massive orchestral realism will accept anything less after hearing the present recording of the *Finale*. That "life assertion," which Bartok said this movement was intended to convey, is assuredly exploited in a vivid way.

—P.H.R.

**BRUCKNER: Symphony No. 3 D Minor;** the Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Walter Goehr. Concert Hall Society 1195, \$5.95.

▲**THERE** are two competitive versions: one on a bargain-priced Remington disc, poorly engineered, and another on two Spa discs—coupled with what there is of the Mahler *Tenth* that is much better performed by Scherchen on Westminster anyway—which is the opposite of economy. All around the latest version is the most sensible. Goehr is no world-beater and he has no history of dedication to the greater glory of Bruckner, but he turns out a workmanlike run-through and the recording is more spacious than we have come to expect from Concert Hall's foreign tapes. (It is good to note the recent renascence of interest in this neglected composer, by the way; when can we expect re-releases of the superb RCA Victor *Ninth* under Hausegger, or the even finer *Fifth* that Walter did for Columbia some years ago?) The *Third* was composed in 1873, when Bruckner was 49. It is not among his grandest achievements and certainly it is not, as the anonymous annotator here claims, "one of the most popular works in the symphonic repertory." But it is thoroughly characteristic, plainly prophetic of the more mature genius that never did quite materialize, and also absorbing; if one does not expect too much, for the transitional effort that it is.

—J.L.

**COPLAND: Appalachian Spring; El Salon Mexico;** the Vienna State Opera Orchestra conducted by Franz Litschauer. Vanguard LP 439, \$5.95.

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▲**SPACIOUS** sound is important in this music and Vanguard has provided the last full measure of it. These are among the best import tapes I have heard on microgroove. And the common sense of pairing the two most popular of Copland's works cannot be gainsaid. There could be some argument, however, about the performances, and even more about the interpretations. The venerable Koussevitzky recording of *El Salon Mexico* was one of the finest in the 78 catalogues, and his young protégé Leonard Bernstein has imparted the magic of it to a 10-inch Columbia disc which also includes the *Création du Monde* of Milhaud. Also there is a respectable *Appalachian Spring* on Urania, coupled with *The Incredible Flutist* of Piston. The versatile Litschauer gets closer to the essence of the dance score than does Rother in the competitive issue, but one suspects that this was a fluke because the present conductor does not begin to approach Bernstein in the shorter piece. The American knows how the music should go. Litschauer is a thoroughly competent man but he makes the mistake of taking the music too literally and the results are not altogether happy. On the other hand this matter of idiomatic correctness always has two sides, with the Atlantic in between.

—J.L.

**COPLAND: Music for the Theatre;** **WEILL: Kleine Dreigroschenmusik;** the MGM Orchestra conducted by Izler Solomon. MGM E-3095, \$4.85.

▲**THIS** disc marks the auspicious debut of Izler Solomon on the MGM label. He is given close-up sound and clean surfaces. The tone of his pick-up orchestra is not pretty, but this is not lush music, either. The Copland performance is a first on microgroove except for a privately available subscription disc, and it is about time that somebody got around to it. The parent *Die Dreigroschenoper* from which "jazz opera" Weill drew this delightful suite can be had complete on a Capitol disc. Its musical substance is stretched out rather thin, however; I find the eight *tableaux* of this orchestral digest just about

# THE FIRST RELEASE OF EDITIONS DE L'OISEAU-LYRE LONDON

LONG PLAYING 33-1/3 r.p.m. MICROGROOVE RECORDS

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It is with great pride that London now announces details of the first American release of the Editions de l'Oiseau-Lyre long playing records. Arrangements have been concluded under which these long playing records, which have gained a world-wide reputation among musical connoisseurs, will in future be pressed and distributed in England and many other countries by FFRR. The great interest aroused by the works recorded on the Oiseau-Lyre label, by the scholarship which has been put into the preparation of the music and the performances, and by the quality of the recordings, makes it quite certain that the making available of these records in the United States will be hailed as a development of the first importance, and as another example of the enterprise of the FFRR companies.

The star item among the first records to be announced is undoubtedly a finely recorded performance of the Monteverdi Vespers. The utmost trouble has been taken to produce a complete and really authentic score. Leo Schrade, Professor of the History of Music at Yale University, went back to the original manuscript, and prepared a score especially for this recording and the result is that the Vespers are presented in a light hitherto unknown.

## MONTEVERDI VESPERS OF 1610

*(Vespro della Beata Vergine et Magnificat)*

MARGARET RITCHIE (Sopr.), ELSIE MORISON (Sopr.), RICHARD LEWIS (Tenor),  
WILLIAM HERBERT (Tenor) and BRUCE BOYCE (Bar.) with THE LONDON SINGERS and  
GERAINT JONES (Organ) and ANTHONY GERLIN (Harpsichord)  
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the right length. Solomon catches the elusive essence of both works, and he deserves a compliment, too, for having chosen such a compatible coupling. —J.L.

**DEBUSSY:** *Fantasy for Piano and Orchestra*; **POULENC:** *Aubade for Piano and 18 Solo Instruments*; Fabienne Jacquinot (piano) and the Westminster Symphony Orchestra conducted by Anatole Fistoulari. MGM E-3069, \$4.85.

**D'INDY:** *Symphony on a Mountain Air, Op. 25*; **SAINT-SAËNS:** *Concerto No. 5 in F, Op. 103*; Fabienne Jacquinot (piano) with Westminster Symphony Orchestra of London conducted by Anatole Fistoulari. MGM E-3063, \$4.85.

▲BRILLIANT recording in both records with a wide range of dynamics and arresting tonal realism. The hall used seems to have excessive reverberation which has varying results in the quality of the music. Also, prevailing crackling in all performances proves disturbing when the music is at a low level. Of the four works, d'Indy's fares best in sound, despite the submergence of the piano and much woodwind detail, for the rhapsodic qualities of the music are well served by conductor and pianist while the dynamic range of the recording makes for ear-thrilling climaxes. Personally, I prefer the piano part less blanketed by the orchestra than it is here, but I cannot deny the success of this performance in sound. The Saint-Saëns' concerto is a thing of glitter and spangles, far less rewarding than the d'Indy, which remains one of that composer's loveliest. The former was written in Egypt and owns an exotic quasi-oriental rhapsody for its second movement and other oriental effects in its *finale*. Its most successful movement is its first, which suggests that the sea inspired its volatility and light scoring. The composer claimed that the concerto reflected the "joy of a sea voyage," which is borne out in movement one; the rest of the work remains pastiche in comparison. Both pianist and conductor do justice to this music.

Debussy's *Fantasy* fares less well under the hands of Miss Jacquinot and Mr. Fistoulari, which may be due to the diffuse character of the recording. I think the masculinity of Mr. Schultes' playing (Lyrichord 38) is all to the good in this music while Mr. Kloss' better defined orchestral background is to be preferred. Poulenc's *Aubade*, with its chamber-proportioned orchestra, comes off better. This neo-classical opus has much melodic charm and that characteristic wit and deft sentiment for which the composer is admired. As music, apart from its choreography, it makes for light and agreeable diversion with its ingenious scoring.

—P.H.R.

**DELIUS:** *Dance Rhapsody No. 1; Summer Night on the River; Summer Evening* (arr. Beecham); *Hassan—Intermezzo and Serenade; A Song before Sunrise; On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring; When Twilight Fancies*; Sir Thomas Beecham conducting the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra with Elsie Sudaby in *When Twilight Fancies*. RCA Victor LP LHMV-1050, \$5.95.

▲NO ONE touches the heart of Delius quite like Sir Thomas; no one achieves subtler or more sensitive interpretations. For a half century the conductor has been championing the cause of this composer. Though this disc duplicates some of the selections on those of Anthony Collins (London LL-758) and Felix Slatkin (Capitol P-8182), the exquisitely personal artistry of Sir Thomas conveys a more intimate rapport with the music. The *Dance Rhapsody* and *Summer Night on a River* are Delius at his best. Those who complain that the composer could not handle form are enjoined to follow the scores of *Brigg Fair* and the *Dance Rhapsody*, in which the variation form is handled with great skill. I have always found the *Dance Rhapsody* as delightful and enduring as *Brigg Fair*, and I welcome it anew to records (it was once available in an acoustic version, slightly excised). After Slatkin's "mechanical" *On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring*, Beecham's interpretation of this tenderly contemplative

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pliative idyl is a benediction; not even the gifted Collins touched the heart strings of this music so deeply. The fantasy, *A Song before Sunrise*, is late Delius (1918), almost, if not quite, as lovely as *Summer Night on a River*. Only *Summer Evening*, an early opus which Beecham has edited, does not sustain similar interest. The inclusion of *When Twilight Fancies*, sweetly sung by Miss Sudsby, was a happy thought of Sir Thomas though it is not one of Delius' finest songs. The recording of these works, which were first issued last year in England on 78 rpm discs, would seem to have found improvement on LP, judging from previous comments by British critics. I only heard one 78 issue, the *Dance Rhapsody*, and I must say I like the mellower sound of the LP. The strings are better here, and in none of the other works do I hear any harshness of sound as others heard from the 78s. The gorgeous sound of Delius' orchestrations is happily attested in this record.

—P.H.R.

**ENESCO:** *Roumanian Rhapsodies Nos. 1 and 2*; Leopold Stokowski and his Orchestra. RCA Victor 10" LP LRM-7043, \$2.99.

▲STOKOWSKI has performed the first *Rhapsody* before, but never under such ideal recording conditions. I have often heard it said that this conductor arbitrarily shapes some of the melodies in both the pieces, but this is not quite true. As the composer has said, the melodies are all drawn from folk materials and no two people are apt to sing or play them quite alike. Stokowski has his own feeling for the slower melodies which is both sensitive and expressive. In the quicker sections with their "trick tempos," he handles the "dazzling symphonic brilliance" in a thrilling way. His orchestra seems to float with a type of auditory magic which is completely his own; a technical achievement which has prevailed in his recordings of the past year. I can imagine few listeners, hearing this record, not being immediately drawn to its particular type of virtuosic display and its brilliant reproduction, which assuredly the music warrants. —P.H.R.

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**HEROLD:** *Zampa—Overture*; **LIADOFF:** *Kikimora, Op. 63*; **HUMPERDINCK:** *Hansel and Gretel—Overture*. RCA Victor 10" LP LRM-7014. **DONIZETTI:** *Don Pasquale—Overture*; **WEBER:** *Oberon—Overture*; *Der Freischuetz—Overture*. RCA Victor 10" LP LRM-7028. **WAGNER:** *Lohengrin—Preludes to Acts I and III*; *Die Meistersinger—Prelude to Act III*; *Siegfried—Forest Murmurs*. RCA Victor 10" LP LRM-7029. Each disc \$2.99. Arturo Toscanini conducting the NBC Symphony Orchestra.

▲TOSCANINI has always had a flair for music of the theatre, confirming its relation to action and expression. Listening to his *Don Pasquale*, one immediately thinks—what would he do to the whole opera! While I admire the more romantic approach of Karl Boehm's overtures to the Weber operas, Toscanini's exquisitely detailed performances offer a special type of auditory excitement which is essentially his own. The same applies to his Wagner. These latest Wagnerian excerpts are most welcome, for in some ways they are better recorded than previous ones, duplicated here. Moreover, there is a better balance between treble and bass. The real surprise here is his rendition of Liadoff's *Kikimora* in which he bestows an attention to detail and balance such as I have never heard before. The reproduction is excellent in every way—all were performed and recorded in Carnegie Hall under the most ideal conditions with just the right amount of reverberation to preserve clarity in detail.

—P.H.R.

**HONEGGER:** *Symphony for Strings*; **JOHNSON:** *Concerto for Piano and Chamber Orchestra*; John Kirkpatrick (piano) and the Rochester Chamber Orchestra conducted by Robert Hull. Concert Hall Society 1189, \$5.95.

▲THE Honegger dates from the days of the German occupation. Like any Parisian the composer was in a blue funk over his city's ignominy, and this music shows it. Honegger has always inclined to the

bleak and austere, anyway; given a legitimate excuse his pessimism really sank to its uttermost depths. This *Symphony for Strings* is neither as much a horror as the earlier *Symphonie Liturgique* (which, however, I am told Munch can do wonders with) nor as much a masterpiece as the more recent *Fifth Symphony* (which Munch has done wonders with on RCA Victor LM-1741). Hull, to his credit, emphasizes the structural unity of the score without undue obeisance to its pervading gloom. The slender *Concerto* by Hunter Johnson is at once redolent, thematically, of the Chausson *Opus 21*. Further analogies would not be untoward. Johnson is essentially a balletic composer; his music in any other *genre* inevitably invites extra-musical inferences. On its absolute merits the present work is arresting rather than edifying. Again the performance is fully sympathetic. Both recordings are satisfactory, but not exciting.

—J.L.

**LISZT:** *A Faust Symphony* (3 sides); *Mazepa* (1 side); L'Orchestre de l'Association des Concerts Colonne conducted by George Sebastian. *Urania* set 606, \$11.90.

▲SEBASTIAN'S performance of Liszt's *Dante Symphony* (*Urania* 7103) was in my estimation the best of the three recent issues because it avoided sensational effects in the dramatic sections. It offered the best correlation of lyricism and drama. A sound musician, Sebastian's interpretative absorption with the first two movements of the present work—those depicting the characters of Faust and Gretchen—is appreciable for its sound musical taste, but in the final characterization of Mephistopheles he misses the piquancy and volatility of this Scherzo. Here, in his unswerving exactitude his directness fails. Meyrowitz's playing in the older recording (*Vox* PL-6920) is more imaginatively stimulating. The omission of the final "Chorus Mysticus" in this new recording can be condoned on the basis that Liszt's aim to be reverent in his coda was nearer to sentimental dullness than reverence, yet this omitted coda for tenor solo and

chorus completes the program by combining themes previously assigned to the three characters and, therefore, is the more effective ending. The Symphonic Poem, *Mazepa*, is well played though more dramatic stress would have advantageously made for greater excitement. The recorded sound in both works is realistic but not quite as expansive as it might have been. One wonders why the *Faust Symphony* was not issued on a single disc, as was the *Vox* version, which does not seem to have suffered as a result of the telescoping.

—P.H.R.

**OFFENBACH:** *Gaite Parisienne*; Walter Suesskind conducting the Royal Opera House Orchestra; **STRAUSS, Joh.:** *Emperor Waltz*; *Du und Du Waltz* from *Die Fledermaus*; Bruno Seidler-Winkler conducting Concert Orchestra. *RCA Victor* LP *LPC-1065*, \$2.98.

▲THE recording of the Offenbach music is better than that of the Strauss waltzes, though the latter are satisfactory. Suesskind plays the Offenbach potpourri more in the nature of a symphonic suite than in its relation to the dance. I really prefer the Kurtz version, which is handled with more freedom and overall verve. But one cannot deny that this superbly recorded disc, with a couple of Strauss' waltzes thrown in, is a better buy. The Russian music included with the Kurtz is not everybody's regular diet while Johann Strauss is always welcome, even as an encore to the Offenbach capers.

—J.N.

**SANDI:** *Ballet Bonampak*; Luis Sandi conducting the National Symphony Orchestra of Mexico; and *13 Brazilian Songs* sung by Sarita Gloria (soprano) with Anthony Chanaka at the piano. *RCA Victor* LP *LM-1737*, \$5.45.

▲THIS exotic ballet music is by one of Mexico's most distinguished musicians who has long held important positions in his country—such as the Director General of Fine Arts and Professor of the National Conservatory of Music. Santi, born in 1905, is a nationalist. His music, says

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Slonimsky, "is permeated with Mexican folklore, while the structural element of his works is on the classical side." In this ballet he employs rhythms, scales and melodies, characteristic of Mexico, as well as Indian percussion instruments and other effects probably derived from the Indians. The story of the ballet deals with a flourishing city, Bonampak, which is threatened by a neighboring state. As worshippers of the sun god, its people prepare for war with dance invocations; then comes the battle and the victory. The *finale*, a festivity of triumph with primitive and exotic effects, is colorful and rather fascinating. I found the use of the Indian flute in melancholic stanzas—heard first at the beginning—quite evocative. This score offers an exotic experience in which there is more artistic restraint than is usually encountered in music of its kind. On first acquaintance, one cannot predict its listening durability, though it is quite possible that many will find it a type of diversion which draws them back again and again. The recording is hardly what we term hi-fi, but it is quite atmospheric as well as realistic. The Brazilian songs, sung by a lovely soprano on the reverse side of the disc, fail to capture the imagination of at least one listener. How can one really appreciate such songs without knowledge of the texts? All we have here are titles in Portuguese and English, which are far from satisfactory. Surely, it is a beholden duty of a big record company to supply such information with alien vocal music!

—P.H.R.

**SHOSTAKOVICH:** *Symphony No. 5, Op. 47*; the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York conducted by Dimitri Mitropoulos. Columbia LP ML-4739, \$5.45. Also performed by the Symphony Orchestra of Radio Berlin conducted by Ernest Borsamsky. Urania LP 7098, \$5.95.

▲IF the Mitropoulos performance had not come along I would have been inclined to speak more kindly of Borsamsky's. His tempi, except in the last movement, are rather too deliberate, but he handles the score with a respectful care

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that it deserves and often is denied. His forces are in exceptional form, too, and reproductively the recording is at least adequate. One hearing of the competitive version, however, is enough to establish its superiority on most counts. Sonically the Columbia disc is an amazing accomplishment, even if the overall orchestral tone has a certain edginess to it that would have been inappropriate in almost any other standard symphony. The brass highs are ringing loud and clear. Also there are exquisite *pianissimo* moments, notably in the latter pages of the long *Largo*. Mitropoulos elects a pedestrian tempo at the outset of the *Finale* but he builds up to a shattering climax at the end and his conception is quite impressive as a whole.

—J.L.

**STRAUSS:** *Don Quixote, Op. 35*; Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, Pierre Fournier (cello), Ernst Moraweg (viola), Clemens Krauss (conductor). London LP LL-855, \$5.95.

▲KRAUSS, a long time friend of Richard Strauss, has become since the composer's death his leading exponent on the Continent. His skill and assurance in handling of detail and clarification of contrapuntal patterns is especially praiseworthy. This marked his rendition of *Heldenleben* (London LL-659) as the best on records by several critics in this country and in England. The beautifully phrased and tonal expressiveness of Pierre Fournier lends distinction to this performance, which is superbly recorded with glowingly rich sound. Those who like the heavier bass reverberation associated with the reproduction of the Vienna Philharmonic will particularly admire this record which, while being an extended-range product, does not have the overall brightness of sound on the higher end that other famous orchestras do in recording. There are many musicians as well as critics, however, who contend that this type of reverberant richness is appropriate to Strauss' scores.

—P.H.R.

**WIREN:** *Serenade for Strings, Op. 11*;

**LARSSON:** *Pastorale Suite, Op. 19*; the Stockholm Radio Orchestra con-

ducted by Stig Westerberg. London LS-714, \$4.95.

▲BETWEEN London and Mercury there has been no dearth of Scandinavian representation in the microgroove repertory. The names of Dag Wirén (b. 1905) and Lars-Erik Larsson (b. 1908) will be new to most, but both seem to have attained a stature of sorts in their native Sweden. At least one of them, on the present evidence, quite deserves to be known elsewhere: the Wirén *Serenade* is a perfectly lovely little work, altogether personal stylistically, extremely moving in its restive slow movement and otherwise full of warmth and wit. If the Larsson *Suite* is a fair sample of his gifts, his local eminence passeth understanding. It is an unabashed abstract of Sibelius, distinguished only by its brevity. The respective performances are admirable, the recordings a bit edgy but thoroughly clean and clear.

—J.L.

## Concerto

**CORELLI:** *Concerti Grossi, Op. 6, Nos. 1, 2, 7, 8, 9*; Società Corelli. RCA Victor LP LM-1776, \$5.45.

▲THERE are beautiful sounds to be heard from this record, which was excellently engineered in Italy. The Società Corelli is a new organization which specializes in music of the early Italian composers, as does the Virtuosi di Roma. It was to be expected that this ensemble, whose name honors Corelli, should record performances of this composer. By rights this, rather than the Baroque program heard on their previous disc (LM-1767) should have constituted their initial bow in the record field. There is, of course, a set of the complete *Concerti Grossi* of Corelli (Vox PL-7893) which would enlist the interest of the enthusiast, but listening to more than a couple of Corelli's concertos at one sitting is not every man's pleasure, even if he admires the music of this singularly gifted composer. Hence, a concert of five—to be best appreciated by listening to one side at a time—was wiser than the

recording of all nine concertos. Undoubtedly, the Società Corelli will record the other four—their name makes it an essential. I like particularly the performance of the *No. 2 in D major* with its charming pastoral effects, allied here to *No. 8*—the so-called *Christmas Concerto*. *Nos. 2, 7, and 9* occupy the reverse face. Stylistically, the *Virtuosi di Roma* are more appreciable in its performance of *No. 8*. The tonal lushness of the present ensemble makes for a type of expressiveness which belongs to a later era than Corelli's. In like manner, the string brilliance of the Vox performances would have been alien to the composer's time. Though one admires the beauty of sound and musical polish of the present players, one feels that the *Virtuosi di Roma* is the more logical group to honor Corelli.

—P.H.R.

**MENASCE:** *Piano Concerto No. 2; Divertimento on a Children's Song for Piano and Strings; Petite Suite for Piano*; Jacques de Menasce (piano) and the Vienna State Opera Orchestra conducted by Edmund Appia. Vanguard VRS-442, \$5.95.

▲SHADES of Ravel hang heavy over this *Concerto*, with a dash of Rachmaninovistic spice thrown in to enliven the Franco-Hebraic flavor. The composer wades through his virtuosic pages with splendid *élan*, and the recording is brilliant. Myself I like better the diaphonous *Divertimento*, wispy and full of wit and much less a mere vehicle than the larger work. Menasce's gifts as an orchestrator are more effectively evidenced here, too. The *Petite Suite* is nice while it lasts, but its essence does not linger. The smaller pieces are as well engineered as the *Concerto*, although there is no real intimacy in the presence.

—J.L.

**SHOSTAKOVICH:** *Concerto for Piano, Trumpet and Strings, Op. 35; Sonata No. 2 in B Minor, Op. 64*; Menahem Pressler (piano), Harry Glantz (trumpet) and the MGM Orchestra conducted by Theodore Bloomfield. MGM E-3079, \$4.85. Also: *Sonata for Cello and*

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*Piano, Op. 40*; Emanuel Brabec (cello) and Franz Holletschek (piano). London LD-9075, \$2.95.

▲NOISY surfaces detract somewhat from the first-class performance of the *Concerto*, but nobody will have any trouble hearing Harry Glantz and his contribution is worth the price of the disc. The coupling is unfortunate; only a confirmed admirer of Shostakovich would claim any distinction for the *B Minor Sonata*. Again the sound is inferior, so that the rattling passage work seems a mockery of the "tremendous drama" that the program annotator perceives. The *Cello Sonata* is another matter. I would venture to say that it is perhaps, with the *Quintet*, Shostakovich's most successful essay in the small forms. I am not familiar with the Piatigorsky version on the Entré label but surely the present version offers better recording if not the more lush interpretation. Those who do not know this wonderful score are warmly commended to the properly small-scale but quite sensitive reading it gets on the London disc—which is also bargain-priced, incidentally.

—J.L.

**VIVALDI:** *Concerto for Five Instruments in D* ("La Pastorella"); *Sonata for Flute, Bassoon and Harpsichord in A minor*; *Concerto for Flute, Oboe and Bassoon in G minor*; *Sonata for Oboe and Harpsichord*; *Concerto for Four Instruments in F*; Jean-Pierre Rampal (flute), Pierre Pierlot (oboe), Robert Gendre (violin), Paul Hongne (bassoon), Robert Veyron-Lacroix (harpsichord). Haydn Society LP 82, \$5.95.

**VIVALDI:** *Concerto for Bassoon, Strings and Harpsichord in A minor*; Enzo Muccetti, the String Orchestra of La Scala, Milan, conducted by Tommaso Valdinoci; *Concerto for Violin, Strings and Harpsichord in F flat*; Enrico Minetti with same orchestra. Colosseum LP 1015, \$5.95.

▲THE HAYDN Society disc offers Vivaldi performances by an expert group of French soloists, originally recorded by the Paris music shop—*La Boîte à Musique*. The reproduction is intimate, with a

minimum of reverberation yet clear and clean in tone quality—the various instruments have as true a profile as if they were seen in a photograph. So much of Vivaldi's music can be considered *Gebräuchsmusik* (as the Germans so wisely labelled music that was for daily use as exercise as well as for public diversion). Some of these pieces fall into that category, and yet so ingenious was Vivaldi at spinning a melody that one often finds oneself tempted to hum or whistle his tunes. The *Concertos for Five and Four Instruments* are by far the best works, reminding us once again that Bach owed

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Vivaldi much, even in his *Brandenburg Concertos*. The buoyant lyricism of the *D major Concerto* in its lively movements and the quiet beauty of its *Largo* gives one a sense of happy well-being in rustic surroundings, while the elation of the fast movements in the *F major Concerto* and the melodic graciousness of the *Largo* are a delight. Haydn never wrote a finale that sent his listeners home in a happier state of mind. Of the other three works, none of which is dull, the *Concerto for Flute, Oboe and Bassoon*, with its lively spontaneity and deft instrumental interplay, is the most engaging.

The Colosseum disc, recorded originally in Italy, offers two fine concertos for larger ensembles. The well balanced recording here is much better than the earlier Italian releases sponsored by Colosseum, with sufficient reverberation to give tonal coloration and richness. The performances convey that feeling of musical enjoyment which Italian musicians know so well how to impart. These players from the La Scala orchestra, in a holiday from the opera house, show their knowledge and appreciation of music of an earlier era. The *Concerto for Bassoon* gives that "lowly" instrument a rightful prominence. The humor of the opening movement is a delight and the expressive qualities of the *Andante molto* must have pleased the capable soloist. The *Violin Concerto* is an ingratiating work with an attractive slow movement and a diverting finale. The soloist has a pleasingly bright tone, though I think he is too prominently placed for the best balance. Those who admire the music of Vivaldi will assuredly want this disc, but I should warn them that the notes on the envelope are woefully inadequate.

—P.H.R.

## Instrumental

**AMERICAN CONCERT BAND MASTERSPIECES:** *Divertimento for Band* (Persichetti), *Ballad for Band* (Gould), *George Washington Bridge* (Schuman), *Suite of Old American Dances* (Bennett), *Tunbridge Fair* (Piston), and *Commando March* (Barber); the Eastman

Symphonic Wind Ensemble conducted by Frederick Fennell. Mercury LP MG-40006, \$5.95.

▲**PROMOTION** copy to the contrary, these are not masterpieces by a long shot. Persichetti's six-movement piece is engaging enough; Schuman's "impression" of the bridge he watched a-building is an honest but not quite successful effort to compress his adolescent awe into a few minutes of musical architectonics; Piston's little tone poem is wonderfully evocative and full of brio but too brief to be of any consequence. The rest is trash, however slickly contrived. I must say I never expected to hear Barber's *Commando March* again; we were importuned with it too many times during the late war and I, for one, would as leave file it away until the next one. In all fairness there is one aspect of this disc which can be described as a "masterpiece," and that is the collective performance turned in by the Eastman kids. Wind players will not want to miss it. The sound, as usual with Mercury, is stunning.

—J.L.

**MARCHES MILITAIRES FRANCAISES;** Band of *La Garde Republicaine* of Paris conducted by Francois-Julien Brun. Angel LP 35051, \$5.95.

▲**FIFTY YEARS** ago, when the imprimatur of the now reconstituted Angel first appeared, it was on a batch of *marche militaires francaises* by this same band. Hence, there's sentimental justification for including this disc among the initial releases of the new label sponsored by the redoubtable Dario Soria. Also it was sound business, because the very ensemble that plays this recorded concert is making a tour of America this season. In this repertory, surely, the band of *La Garde Republicaine* is absolutely *nonpareil*. Included here are four marches from the Revolutionary period (moviegoers will be happy to know that the one by Chomel was the theme music of *Fanfan la Tulipe*), five from the period of Napoleon I, three from the time of the Franco-Prussian War through Sarajevo, and four from the most modern military era ending

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 Eduard van Beinum—Concertgebouw  
 Orch. of Amsterdam

LD-9039 **Espana—Marche Joyeuse** (Chabrier)  
**Pavane** (Ravel)  
 Ernest Ansermet—L'Orchestre de la  
 Suisse Romande

LD-9044 **Johann Strauss Polkas**  
 Clemens Krauss—The Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra

LD-9046 **Orb and Sceptre** (Walton)  
**Coronation March, 1953** (Bax)  
 Sir Malcolm Sargent—London Symphony Orchestra

LD-9048 **Rhapsodies Nos. 1 and 2, Opus 79** (Brahms)  
 Wilhelm Kempff, Piano

LD-9049 **La Source—Ballet Music** (Delibes)  
**Valse Triste** (Sibelius)  
**Praeludium** (Järnefelt)  
 Victor Olof—L'Orchestre de la  
 Suisse Romande

LD-9052 **Carmen:** "Parlez moi de ma mère"  
 (Bizet)  
**Carmen:** Final Scene  
 Litero Luca (Don José); Janine  
 Micheu (Micaela); Suzanne Joyol  
 (Carmen) with the Orchestre de  
 l'Opéra Comique, Paris, conducted  
 by Albert Wolff

LD-9053 **Puccini Operatic Arias** (from  
 "Madame Butterfly" and "La  
 Bohème")  
 Renata Tebaldi, Soprano, with the  
 Orchestra of l'Accademia di Santa  
 Cecilia, Rome, conducted by Alberto  
 Erede

LD-9064 **The Flying Dutchman: Overture**  
 (Wagner)  
**Die Walkure: The Ride of the**  
**Valkyries** (Wagner)  
 Hans Knappertsbusch—The Vienna  
 Philharmonic Orchestra

LD-9068 **Die Geisha—Vocal Highlights**  
 (Jones)  
**Im Weisen Rosi** "The White Horse  
 Inn"  
 Soloists, Chorus and Orchestra of the  
 Municipal Opera, Berlin, conducted  
 by Hansgeorg Otto

LD-9074 **Arias From Russian Opera** (Sadko;  
 Life for the Tsar; Eugen Onegin;  
 Prince Igor)  
 Raphael Arie, Bass, with the Paris  
 Conservatory Orchestra conducted  
 by Alberto Erede

LD-9077 **Aida:** Radames and Amneris Duet  
 and Final Scene (Verdi)  
**Mario del Monaco** (Radame); Renata  
 Tebaldi (Aida); Ebe Stignani  
 (Amneris); Orchestra of L'Accademia  
 di Santa Cecilia, Rome, conducted  
 by Alberto Erede.

LD-9089 **Le Cid—Ballet Music** (Massenet)  
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with (for those Frenchmen who did not foresee the Indochinese mess) the day the Allies liberated Paris. The most jaded listeners are commended to this disc without reservation, if only to keep around as an antidote to the ennui that occasionally besets us all. The recording, made in the *Théâtre des Champs-Elysées*, is splendidly sonorous.

—J.L.

## Chamber Music

**HAYDN:** *String Quartets, Op. 76* (complete); the Schneider Quartet. Haydn Society set HSQ-L, comprising HSQ-34/36, \$17.85; also available singly, consecutive pairs to the disc, at \$5.95

▲ONE of phonography's most estimable projects is now within sight of its goal. With this omnibus recording of the *Opus 76* the splendid Schneiders have all but realized their formidable plan to essay the complete string quartet literature of Haydn on microgroove. The same debits and credits assigned earlier may be repeated—Alexander Schneider continues to dominate his ensemble unduly but the dedication that is manifest cannot be gainsaid, and the interpretations are as authentic as modern musicology could insure. Of all the Haydn series in this *genre* the *Opus 76* surely contains the largest number of acknowledged masterworks. The house of Artaria announced its first edition of them with the statement: "Nothing has yet been presented by us that could equal this publication." The sentiment might be expressed of these discs, too. The sound is superb.

—J.L.

### MASTERPIECES OF MUSIC BEFORE 1750

1750: Various Danish soloists and ensembles under the overall direction of Mogens Woeldike. Haydn Society set HSL-B, \$17.85.

▲SEVERAL seasons ago W. W. Norton & Company published a valuable anthology of the pre-classical literature entitled, as this omnibus recording is, "Masterpieces of Music Before 1750." The sam-

lings, most of them unfamiliar, had been edited by Carl Parrish and John F. Ohl. The book was, and properly continues to be, a considerable success in academic circles. Now the estimable Haydn Society has prepared six microgroove sides that are intended to be used, but do not depend on, this widely current volume. The text covered precisely fifty works. All of them are heard here in their entirety. The set constitutes, with its exhaustive notes drawn from the book, a historical survey of those pre-dawn centuries that culminated in the tonal epoch. A listing of the works or the participants would be out of the question in this limited space. Of the latter, suffice it to say that they are every one professional or better. Musically, the discs cover a vast ground: from the earliest extant antiphon to *The Art of the Fugue* (on which Bach was working when he died, in 1750) by way of secular monody, free and melismatic organum, and characteristic smidgens of Monteverdi, Carissimi, Scheutz, Lully, Pachelbel, Corelli, Rameau, Domenico Scarlatti and Handel. The sound throughout is up to the best we have come to expect from the Haydn Society, which is to say marvelous. No musical home should be without HSL-B—it is the best browsing on records.

—J.L.

**PURCELL:** *Seven Trio Sonatas (Book II)*; Giorgio Ciompi and Werner Torkanowsky (violins), George Koutzen (cello), Herman Chessid (harpsichord). Period LP disc SPL572, \$5.95.

▲CLEAR recordings of some of the most noble and touching music known to anyone; and much of it available now for the first time. These trio sonatas which were published in 1697 two years after the composer's death represent much of Purcell's most serious output. Most listeners will be familiar only with the fine *Sonata in F* (No. 9) usually called the *Golden Sonata*. Others equally as lovely are *No. 7 in C*, *No. 1 in B minor*, *No. 2 in E flat*, and *No. 8 in G minor*. *No. 10 in D* and *No. 4 in D minor*, though of lesser stature, are still worth your attention. The playing here is devoted,

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scholarly, and a little too careful. Less restraint and less awe at the music's real grandeur would have improved the result of this ensemble's labor. The disc is, of course, still good to have and to cherish.

—C.J.L.

## Keyboard

**BACH:** *French Suites*; Isolde Ahlgren (harpsichord). Columbia LP disc ML-4746, \$5.45. Same by Reine Gianoli (piano). Westminster LP set WAL-307, 3 discs, \$17.85.

▲AHLGRIMM'S and Gianoli's ways with music of this type are already well known to readers of these columns. The recordings which these performers are likewise typical. The discrepancy between Columbia's taking one disc for all six *French Suites* and Westminster's needing three is accountable to Miss Ahlgren's omission of all the many repeats in each work. Neither version will be apt to cause any excitement. Fernando Valenti has already outdistanced his rivals in his excellent performance on three discs for Westminster. As for the music, I find only the delightful fifth suite in G and the sixth in E more than moderately interesting.

—C.J.L.

**BRAHMS:** *Variations on a Theme of Paganini, Op. 35; Variations and Fugue on a Theme of Handel, Op. 24*; Sascha Gorodnitzki (piano). Capitol LP P-8227, \$5.70.

▲CAPITOL is to be complimented for having signed this fine artist. I fail to understand why he was not taken in hand by the recording fraternity long ago. He is a pianist of superb endowments and exquisite taste, and both of these attributes are glowingly in evidence on this disc. The sound is lifelike, too; more so, in fact, than on any Capitol disc I have heard recently except the one that coupled the Shostakovich *Piano Concerto* with Hindemith's *Four Temperaments*, and this is no small praise. His

interpretations are traditional in the finest sense, which is to say that they are more romantic than not, befitting the essence of the pianistic Brahms. —J.L.

**CHOPIN:** Vol. 1 Complete Piano Works (*Scherzi, Ballades, Impromptus, Barcarolle*); Claudio Arrau (piano). Decca LP set, 2 discs, DS-130, \$11.70.

▲LIVELY sound of warmth and clarity enhances the value of this opening issue of what Decca plans to be a complete compendium of Chopin's incomparable keyboard literature. It is a worthy project and everyone who admires real piano sound will be attracted to these first discs. Most will find Claudio Arrau, on the basis of his playing here, the same sincere artist with the same noble intentions he has ever vouchsafed. Those listeners who ask for near fidelity to Chopin's requests in regard to pacing and to rhythm will be disappointed and will look elsewhere for performances that have greater flow from one musical point to the next, that give these pieces more shape. And many, like your reviewer, will find that Arrau leans too heavily on the music's sentiment (for sake of contrast with the more dramatic episodes, I suppose) thereby upholding the legend that Chopin is weak and morbid rather than strong and sensitive (as so many believe him to be in his best work).

—C.J.L.

**COPLAND:** *Passacaglia* (1922), *Piano Variations* (1930), *Piano Sonata* (1941); Webster Aitken (piano). Walden Records LP disc 101, \$5.95.

▲AT LAST LP seems to be getting around to taking care of the more forbidding aspects of Copland's work. The grand and powerful *Third Symphony* has recently been handsomely presented by Mercury. Now we get the granitic *Piano Variations* of 1930, which represent a landmark in our most distinguished composer's output, as well as the fully mature and exciting *Piano Sonata* (1941) and an early *Passacaglia* dedicated to Copland's mentor Nadia Boulanger. Walden Records has picked the splendid

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American pianist Webster Aitken to tackle these works and has provided him with the most efficient engineering support it could have mustered. So much care, thought, and skill have gone to this record. One wishes the results were more impressive. Everything that Aitken does is musical and many of Copland's lines emerge graciously flowing. But the rock-like qualities of the *Variations*, in particular, seem softened and there is not the impression of grandeur and strength that should be there. The spirit of the sonata, too, is not so well realized as in the old Bernstein version on 78s. All the same, many will want to acquire this record, in the meantime waiting for a more characteristic treatment of this stimulating and significant music. —C.J.L.

**DEBUSSY:** *La Boîte à joujoux; IBERT: Histoires*; Menahem Pressler, pianist. MGM E3042, \$4.85.

▲MUSIC written for children—unless it be of the calibre of *The Man Who Invented Music* or *Little Ballerina*—is not often heard, *Peter and the Wolf* notwithstanding. It took years (and LP) for us to learn that *L'Enfant et les sortilèges* is a Ravel masterpiece. Satie's exquisite *Jack in the Box* is still completely unknown, even in Milhaud's delightful orchestration. Here, however, as a happy exception to the rule, is a charming work for children which is also one of Debussy's major compositions. *The Box of Toys* was written in 1913, the same year as the second book of *Préludes*. Between the two works is such a vast difference that this deceptively simple music for children becomes one of the first works in Debussy's final style. Just as the *Préludes* look backward upon those early works so rightly called "impressionistic," so does this children's ballet look forward to the polyphonic intricacies of *Jeux*, the major harmonic accomplishment of the *Etudes* and works as objective and "non-impressionistic" as those of Ravel and Roussel. However, like all children's music should be, it is fun to listen to and following the nonsensical pantomime illustrated by the score should

be fun for any child. In this sense, *Boîte à joujoux* is more engaging and consistently better music than Debussy's *The Children's Corner*.

The *Stories* of Ibert are just that, ten little program pieces most of them here recorded for the first time. Some, like *Le petit âne blanc* are more than familiar; others deserve to be better known. As always Mr. Pressler does a bang-up job. Too bad that MGM's recording lags far behind. —D.R.

**DEBUSSY:** *Estampes, Suite Bergamasque, Reverie, Arabesques in E and G, La plus que lente, and La fille aux cheveux de lin*; Menahem Pressler (piano). MGM LP E-3054, \$4.85.

▲WHATEVER Pressler does, he does well. He deserves better recording than MGM has given him by and large, although I must say that this disc represents an improvement over previous ones as to sound. It is not in the same class with other extant versions of the same music, however. Nor is Pressler in the same class with Giesecking. Whoever checked the liner copy ought to take a French lesson, too. The eighth *Prelude* from *Book I* has to do with hair, not horses; hence *cheveux*, not *chevaux*. —J.L.

**FALLA:** *Fantasia Baetica, Four Spanish Pieces, Serenata Andaluza, Ritual Fire Dance*; MGM LP disc E3071, \$4.85.

**SHOSTAKOVITCH:** *24 Preludes for Piano*; MGM LP disc E3070, \$4.85. All played by Menahem Pressler.

▲A KIND of unnatural, compressed piano sound and gritty surfaces are deterring factors in listening to these two discs. Pressler does not make the impression in the Falla music as José Echaniz does on his Westminster LP. His style is labored where it should be suave; his expression is often a bit violent where it should seeth; his tonal color is rather limited. But Pressler has a stronger finger technique than his competitor and this ability serves him well in the Shostakovich *Preludes*. This music is quite simple to follow, full of banalities

and a great deal of empty humor. Only occasionally does one run across a number which has any expressive force or which has any real fun. One might enjoy hearing *Preludes 14 in E flat minor* (remembered in the Stokowski transcription), *17 in A flat*, and *19 in E flat*; good tunes here rather well exploited. —C.J.L.

#### HOROWITZ 25TH ANNIVERSARY

**ALBUM:** *Sonata on B Flat, Op. Posth.* (Schubert), *Nocturne in E Minor, Op. 72* and *Scherzo No. 1 in B Minor* (Chopin), *Sonata No. 9, Op. 68* and *Etudes in B Flat Minor, Op. 8, No. 7* and in *C Sharp Minor, Op. 42, No. 5* (Scriabin), and *Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2* (Liszt-Horowitz); also *Serenade for the Doll* (Debussy), *Waltz No. 3 in A Minor, Op. 34, No. 2* (Chopin) and the *Precipitato* from *Sonata No. 7, Op. 83* (Prokofiev). Vladimir Horowitz (piano). RCA Victor set LM-6014, \$11.44.

▲NOBODY has come right out and said it, but a central fact in recording today is that the finished product need not be a result of a single performance. I daresay most of the highly esteemed instrumental solos in the microgroove catalogue are patched up from any number of tapes collected in a day's session at the microphone. It is for this reason, aside from any understandable sentimentality, that one marvels at the artistry of Vladimir Horowitz as demonstrated in these two hours, more or less, of uninterrupted playing. Those who were present in Carnegie Hall on the evening of February 25th, 1953, will recognize the program listed above, and the encores, too. They are now apprised that the Horowitz recital they heard on that occasion was recorded by RCA Victor, every last minute of it, and that it is herewith available for repeated delectation. I do not happen to be a Horowitz fan because his public appearances always seem to me more evocative of an arena than a concert hall. But there is no denying his sovereign talents and I must concede that they are richly in evidence throughout this unique program. I have never heard the Schubert

played so coolly; technically, however, it is more than a match for the Demus or Wuehrer versions currently available. And no one in the world can do such justice to the Scriabin pieces; only the *B Minor Scherzo* of the Chopin group is badly mangled. The reproductive range is extraordinarily wide, considering, and the applause and frequent coughs from the audience do not intrude. They lend a certain verisimilitude, if anything, to the electrically virtuosic atmosphere that prevails. —J.L.

#### Voice

**GREGORIAN CHANTS: Vol. 3;** Benedictine Monks of St. Wandrille de Fontenelle directed by Dom Lucien David. Period LP SPL 576, \$5.95.

▲THIS is a continuation of the series devoted to chanting in its proper setting; the previous discs have included the singing of nuns and choir boys as well as monks. Nothing about any of it can be described as professional, for as is pointed out in the jacket notes, the monks are here "heard in the performance of their duties." The special thing about this program is that it presents plainchant composed and arranged by the director Dom Lucien David and by Dom Pothier, Abbot of St. Wandrille, a leading authority on Gregorian music and official editor of the Vatican editions. Some of the changing is done unaccompanied and some with organ. Naturally this is music of freer cast than that on the two preceding discs, and one should listen to it in the light of the others. One is moved again by the earnestness and devotion of the singing; time seems to stand still while the monks "perform their duties." —P.L.M.

**ANNA RUSSELL SINGS! AGAIN:** Anna Russell (comedienne) and John Coveart (piano). Columbia LP ML-4733, \$5.45.

▲HOW often you can listen to this recital with pleasure I would not venture to say. The first time, certainly, it is a

howl. Miss Russell offers on one side her "analysis" of the Ring cycle; the other contains her take-off on a women's club president introducing a concert, and also a lecture on how to write your own Gilbert & Sullivan opera. The whole business was recorded live at New York's Town Hall this past April 23rd, and the reactions of the audience are no small part of the fun. Those who know the ways of Miss Russell will need no urging to acquire this disc. Others are advised to expose themselves to it unless they have an unduly defensive passion for Wagner or G & S, in which case they ought to hear it anyway lest it be sprung on them by surprise the next time they go to a party. I might say that it is not inconceivable for one to be a Wagnerian or a Savoyard and still get a kick out of Miss Russell.

—J.L.

**THIS I BELIEVE:** Edited by, and commentary by Edward R. Murrow. Columbia LP set SL-192, \$11.90.

▲HERE are the distilled "personal philosophies" of ten living Americans and ten "immortals." The former group, each of whom speaks his or her own piece, are financier Bernard Baruch, actress Helen Hayes, statesman Ralph Bunche, industrialist Charles H. Percy, social worker (Mrs.) Marty Mann, Cleveland editor Louis Seltzer, writer Helen Keller, historian Will Durant, poet Carl Sandburg and, I suppose inevitably, Eleanor Roosevelt. The "immortals" are handled differently; for each a statement has been prepared out of their own writings and an actor or otherwise qualified authority assigned to deliver it. Socrates is spoken for by Barry Jones; the text is by Gilbert Murray. Raymond Massey recites Paul M. Angle's Lincoln; Katherine Cornell, Mrs. C. Woodham-Smith's Florence Nightingale; Hu Shih, Will Durant's Confucius; Franklin D. Roosevelt Jr., Robert E. Sherwood's FDR; Helen Hayes, Hector Bolitho's Queen Victoria; José Ferrer, Henry Butler Allen's Benjamin Franklin; Will Rogers Jr., Donald Day's Will Rogers; Eve Curie, her own statement of her mother's con-



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victions; and S. Radharkrishnan, Louis Fischer's Gandhi. This cast of characters needs no introduction, surely. A twice-weekly average of 39,000,000 listeners having heard not only the the living personalities singled out here but some 880 others say what they believe, it remains only to deplore the omission of so many who might have been more edifying than the proxy "immortals" turn out to be. The sound is excellent. —J.L.

## Bach Organ Music

(Continued from page 189)

the *Orgeluechlein* was perceived, the fundamental character of Bach's art remained, almost down to the present day, obscure and disputable." One should read Schweitzer's comments on these little Chorale Preludes, in which a world of devotional beauty and peace abide. Though the order of the chorales that of their succession in the church year has the greatest significance, one does not have to know this to appreciate their emotional expression and varying sentiments which are, to say the least, considerable. Does one dream when listening to music like this, dream of a world of peace and good will? One may! For they are among the most rewarding works of their kind with which to spend a half hour after a troublesome day. Their variety of mood seems endless; their consoling qualities unlimited.

In these works, the melody, used as a *cantus firmus*, is usually in the uppermost voice while "round it plays an independently conceived motive, not derived from any of the lines of the melody, but prompted by the text of the chorale, and embodying the poetic idea that Bach regarded as characteristic for music and expressible in musical terms." No one, in my estimation, has played any of these little works more sensitively on records than the present organist, who has at his disposal a particularly fine organ that brings out each line clearly and cleanly. There is no diffuse reverberation. The recording therefore offers exceptionally fine organ reproduction. A word should

be said for Mr. Videro's registrations, which are constantly varied, thus giving an individual character to each Chorale Prelude.

—P.H.R.

## RECORD ROUNDUP

▲DECCA is continuing its so-called 4000 Series, all ten-inch discs *sans* program notes retailing at \$2.50. The pianist Carl Seemann is twice represented: On DL 4085 he offers two of the late Bela Bartok's essays in sophisticated folklorism, the *Improvisations, Op. 20* and the suite *For Children* (1945). On DL 4079, with the Bamberg Symphony Orchestra conducted by Fritz Lehmann, he plays two *Concert-Rondos* by Mozart, the K. 382 in D and the K. 386 in A. The Bartok pieces are handily turned out, but Seemann does not give the impression that he is sold on them as music. He is much more at home with Mozart, and the accompaniments are expert, too, except that Lehmann always strikes me as rather unbending, and certainly incapable of apprehending any inherent humor in a work. These *Concert-Rondos* are frankly showcases, however, so that all the conductor has to do is beat time. The same is not quite so true of the Brahms *Hungarian Dances*, and on DL-4078 we have the somewhat more imaginative Paul Van Kempen doing Nos. 1, 3, 5, 6, and 17 through 21 in fine style with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. The violinist Joseph Fuchs, on DL-4082, plays five Tchaikovsky favorites with Camarata (that's his whole name) and his orchestra. The pieces are not the pure article in every instance as you can see: *Autumn Song*, *Song Without Words*, *Swan Lake*, *Serenade Melancolique* and *Melodie*. At this late date Tchaikovsky could not mind so much, however, and his more purist adherents would seem to have lost their battle long since. Fuchs shows us some remarkable intonation, but not much of the lush tone that Tchaikovsky needs. On DL-4083 the pianist Maxim Schapiro offers ten *Etudes* by Virgil Thomson, the critic who also composes and conducts but not as well as he criticizes. This collection assembles *Fanfare*, *Spinning Song*, *Canon*, *Aeolian Harp*, *Waltz*, *Tango*, *Music-Box Lullaby*, *Madrigal Portrait* of Briggs Buchanan, and *Ragtime Bass*. Musically I can see nothing in them whatsoever except a certain small charm. Wilhelm Kempff plays a pair of *Rondos* by Beethoven on DL-4086: the Nos. 1 in C and 2 in G from Op. 51. Kempff is a master pianist if ever there was one, and he infuses these slender compositions with all of their inherent loveliness as well as their usual saloonies amenities. In each of the foregoing discs the recording is only adequate by Decca's highest standards.

A real "sleeper" at the price is MGM E-3053, which is a coupling of suites from Berlioz' *Les Troyens* and Glazka's *Russian and Ludmilla*, performed respectively by the Lamoureux Orchestra under Jean Martinon and the London Symphony conducted by Anatole Fistoulari. In both in-

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stances the performances are nice to hear, but has any composition of exceptional interest and badly recorded? The violin of Radio Bremen is used importably, though the appearance of Respighi's *Phantasmagoria* is a haunting of its many neo-medieval stands as decades. guard 526 recorded a Majdan and excerpts from Nos. 21, 22, singing with a verse—carried over—received—and Urania "races" *cesca da R* respectively Leipzig and Schuetz; *carried over* played by Eiesenhuettzig ensemble. Of these approximations is rather like are more 7-14 Arthur the Radio in a class matter of such is str Symphonie the solo Schartner *cio Espana* Radio Leipzig, able, but Campoli with somiere in *Ar competitiva*

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February,

stances the recording is excellent, and the performances are quite satisfactory. The Glinka music is nice to hear at intervals, though only the *Overture* has any currency today. Another new disc of exceptional interest, although it is poorly performed and badly recorded, is *Urania 7100*; Kurt Stiehler is the violin soloist with the Symphony Orchestra of Radio Leipzig in Respighi's *Concerto Gregoriano*. There used to a splendid 78 version of this on an import label. The present disc is the work's first appearance on microgroove, and it is about time, though the score is perhaps the least successful of Respighi's experiments. All the same there is a haunting fascination to Gregorian Chant in any of its manifestations, among which this harmonically neo-medieval essay in baroque concerto form stands as the most outstanding example of recent decades. The Bach Guild has reissued, on Vanguard 526, a sampling of the arias from cantatas recorded and released earlier. Hildegard Roessl-Majdan and Hugues Cuenod are soloists in excerpts from the *Easter Oratorio* and the *Cantatas Nos. 21, 46, 63, 104, 133 and 161*. First class singing within a fairly narrow scope. Just the reverse—careless performances but ambitiously conceived—are a batch of Tchaikovsky items on the *Urania* "request" list: On 7-22 there are *Francesca da Rimini* and *Romeo and Juliet*, performed respectively by the Symphony Orchestra of Radio Leipzig and the same orchestra under Jose Eibenschuetz; on 7-16 there are the *Capriccio Italien*, played by the same orchestra under Gerhard Eiesenbuetter, and the *1812 Overture*, with the Leipzig ensemble again, Gerhard Pflueger conducting. Of these four only the *Francesca* really sounds approximately as it should; this Borsamsky is an arresting personality. The reproductive range is rather limited, and the surfaces are noisy. There are more *Urania* "request" discs at hand: On 7-14 Arthur Rother elicits a Brahms *Fourth* from the Radio Berliners and it is not bad, albeit not in a class with our recent domestic issues in the matter of sheer execution. The interpretation as such is straightforward. On 7-13 we find the *Lalo Symphonie Espagnole*, with Ferdinand Meissel playing the solo part with the Radio Berliners, Walter Scharnert conducting; the coupling is the *Capriccio Espagnol*, with Rolf Kleinert conducting the Radio Leipzigers. The performances are respectable, but at any price no one can duplicate the Campoli wizardry in the former or that of Desomiere in the latter. The ubiquitous Grieg *Concerto in A Minor* is with us again, this time in two competitive versions in the low-price field: On

*Urania 7-15* Friedrich Wuehrer plays it with the Vienna Philharmonic under Karl Boehm (the coupling is the Rachmaninov *Rhapsody*, played by Julian von Karolyi and the Radio Berliners under Rother) and on *RCA Victor LBC-1043* it is played by Ania Dorfmann with the Robin Hood Dell Orchestra, Erich Leinsdorf conducting. The Wuehrer-Boehm performance is powerful to a fault, with a few slips at the keyboard and lots of stridency in the overdriven orchestra. But it is impressive with, if not as much so as the Lipatti performance it seems to emulate; the Karolyi conception of the Rachmaninov is undramatic, to say the least. The Dorfmann disc is lyrically lovely, and it has much better sound as well; the coupling is a scintillating run-through of the Mendelssohn *Concerto No. 1*.

MGM has been doing some commendable coupling lately, a pair of suites per disc is getting to be a habit with this firm and I am sure the bargain-hunters will take notice of W-3072 as they have earlier ones. This offers a suite from *Hansel and Gretel*, a suite from the incidental music Grieg composed for *Sigurd Jorsalfar* and for good measure the latter composer's *Heart Wounds* and *The Last Spring*, all played by the Royal Opera House Orchestra conducted by John Hollingsworth. The performances are admirable; the recording satisfactory.

—J.N.

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